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THE LOST
FATHER



D. HOLME



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Charles uttered a cry of joy and surprise.—Page 96.
Frontispiece.

THE LOST FATHER

OR

CECILIA'S TRIUMPH.

A Story of our own Day.

BY DARYL HOLME

EDINBURGH:
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1870.

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PREFACE.

THIS story is the same in build and is based on nearly the same incidents as Madame Julie Gouraud's *Cécile, ou La Petite Sœur*. But it is not a translation of that story—at least, not in the most common sense of the word translation. It is a transference rather than a translation. The writer of the story in English has transferred and adapted its materials and framework to new readers. He has rewritten it in English. He has left out a few, and added a few, incidents. If to transfuse the spirit of a story into tastes and habits, as well as customs and religious feelings, different from those originally addressed, be to translate, the writer may call this English story about a French family a translation. If the word translation is not so elastic, it is a transference.

And the writer sends the story forth in its English dress, with an earnest hope that the purity of heart and life produced and preserved by firmness of purpose, kindness of disposition, and sound religious feeling, which its characters illustrate, will be both admired and imitated by many in their day of sorrow or of gladness. It was the obvious presence of these features of character in the original historiette which induced the English author to try and transfer it to such of the reading youth at home as may not know French, or whose knowledge of that language may not be so ample as to render the beauties of a story quite evident.



THE LOST FATHER;

OR

CECILIA'S TRIUMPH.

CHAPTER I.

THIS is a story of the good time present. The jetty at Havre was very much crowded one blowy day of April 1851. If you think such a crowd gathers only to see something they have never seen before, or which is to be seen but rarely, you are a little simple, although, I have no doubt, you are very good. The sight they came out to look at on this occasion, was one of the commonest to the good people of the port of Paris. It was a French ship returning from India, and entering their harbour, up the narrow channel, and between those two jetties which throw themselves out like eager arms of welcome. A stage-coach when our fathers were young, and a railway train now that we make them feel

growing old, was and is a power all potent to attract old and young, and set them a staring in a crowd. A ship from India is, it must be admitted, by the very nature of distance, and the difference between land and water, a much rarer sight. And this particular ship, on that sulky April day, had a special claim on the sympathetic attentions of the crowd. A savage nor'-wester set on his wildest waves to buffet her, and everybody on the jetty was, for a time, honestly afraid that the 'Grace' would sink to rest instead of sailing into the arms of the anxious haven. The people on board the 'Grace,' however, had no such fears or feelings. She had sported with wilder winds, and danced with waves more presumptuous, and in more dangerous seas. And the people on board were wise in their confidence. For in two hours the 'Grace' sailed proudly into the harbour, and looked as if she expected applause from the kindly crowd who were not slow to raise a very respectful noise.

Among the passengers that landed from the 'Grace' were Mr. and Mrs. Halley. They were truly glad to let their eyes rest again upon their own old town and home. They had three children with them. Maurice had reached the mature age of ten; and a proud young gentleman he looked, as he stood by his father's side holding in his hand a beautiful cage of considerable size. The cage contained a fine young parrot which Maurice kept calling by all sorts of pet names, as often as he could withdraw his attention from his novel and exciting situation. Charles was only five years old as

yet, and he pretended to no greater advancement in age. The poor little fellow was frightened at the roar and bustle on board, and alarmed at the rush and crush on the quay, so he took refuge from them all by pressing as close as he could to his mother. Cecilia, only two years of age, was sound asleep in the arms of an elderly nurse, named Sally. Little sister Cissy recognised no difference between sultry India and sunny France. Sally's arms were the home and native land she loved with all the affection and patriotism she nursed as yet in her true heart. There was nothing in all the bustle which drove Charlie to his mother to disturb her comfortable sleep. Jacob, a faithful negro, was watchful and busy after the luggage.

Mr. Halley was in business, in a very large way, both at home and in foreign parts; and he both merited and enjoyed the highest character as an upright man, and an able and honourable merchant. He had left Havre for India about six years before our introduction to him and his interesting family. He was now come home, after having made satisfactory arrangements about his business in Calcutta; and his intention was, leaving his family at home, to go out by himself occasionally, and see after his business and interests in the East.

Maurice had retained some shadowy recollections of the town in which he was born. And he kept telling Charles, on the voyage homeward, all about it, and a great deal more. 'You'll see,' he would say with

laddish emphasis, 'what a jolly place Havre is—what lots of parrots and monkeys! And our house is the finest in all Ingouville; and it looks out upon the sea. We shan't get roasted there the same as we are in India. And Sally needn't try to make us go to bed in the day-time. We shall have such nice walks together; and we will run down our own garden to the shore. Sha'n't we have such fun, Charlie!'

All this, good-hearted, kindly brother as it showed Master Maurice to be, was rather exacting on the constancy of fortune. But she tried not to be fickle to the boys for once in a way. Mr. Halley's residence at Ingouville, a suburb of Havre, was really delightful, and in a few days they all felt quite at home in their old new house—including Sally and Jacob. Cissy, it is true, was rather behind in her ideas on geography. But she heard her brothers shouting that this was France, and it was such fun, and she tried to say 'France' and 'such-fun' after them.

The education of the boys had now to be attended to, and it was fairly set agoing without any delay. And what merry hours of play were theirs! They would go at one time as far as St. Adresse, at another time to Graville, and they would find their way by lots of bye-paths never discovered by Parisian tourists or traders. Paris Street, the noble main street lined with spacious houses and splendid shops; and the quays where they saw the parrots, the canaries, and the monkeys, were wonders of the world to them. Mr. Halley soon dis-

covered in Maurice great firmness of character and vigour, and he intended to bring him up to be his successor in the business. To be a great voyager, to discover new countries, and to write books of his own adventures by sea and land, were the boyish ambition of Charles, as they have been the darling wish of many a dreamy and daring boy besides. The two boys, of dispositions so unlike, resembled each other closely in one thing. And it would be so pleasant to find this one trait of character, in which they were so like each other, in every family where there are brothers and sisters, or only one sister, as the case was with them. They were quite rivals in their love for their little sister. They quarrelled of course, as brothers always do ; but never in the presence of Cissy. They vied with each other to get doing things that would please her. It was quite a subject of strife who would be allowed to carry her. And deep and diplomatic were the grave discussions when the important question at issue was, who was to receive some special favour which was at her disposal. Even when they were all impatience to go out and play, if Sally said, 'Your little sister is asleep, and you must not go out till she goes with you,' their readiness to remain quiet till she awoke and was dressed was something very beautiful to see.

There is no use of saying, after all this, that the Halleys were a happy family. Mrs. Halley's dearest joy was to be among her children, while their father went to town and attended to his business. And Mr.

Halley never spent his evenings away from his wife and family. And thus they lived while several of their own pleasant years passed over them. They had their country-house for the summer, and Mrs. Halley went regularly and stayed in it, while Mr. Halley came as often and as long as business would allow. But at the beginning of October she always returned to Havre, and remained closely attentive to all her household duties, one of the most important of which, she felt, was to superintend the lessons of her boys.

By-and-bye, however, bad news from abroad rendered it quite necessary that Mr. Halley should pay a visit to Calcutta. When his intention became known, you may be sure it was a great trouble to his wife and children, and also to Sally and Jacob. It was something in Charles's way of thinking, however; and although he was neither asked nor, indeed, answered, he yet felt that his opinion must be given; and it was this: 'I must go with papa. He must take me. I shall be very useful.' About the end of January 1855, at three o'clock in the afternoon of a grey, raw, depressing sort of a day, Mr. Halley went on board an Indiaman. Mrs. Halley and the children, and Sally and Jacob, were all there to say and look a farewell which all felt to be very sad; but Mrs. Halley tried to lighten it by minute attention to every little comfort for her husband. The thick black column of smoke soon begins to darken the dulness of the hour; the numbers coming and going become greater and more confused;



She is off.—Page 8.

every voice is hushed, but the irregular see-saw chorus of the sailors, varied by the peremptory orders of the chief mate; the passengers say and smile or sigh their good-byes to their friends still a moment beside them; the bell rings; they must go ashore. The steamer begins to move; she widens out from the quay; she lurches; she is off! See how people run along the pier, and shift their positions to catch and give another last look or sign. She is out of sight.

Mrs. Halley's heart was very sad when they got home; but she was not a weak woman. Maurice, Charles, and Cecilia did what they could to shed on mamma and on each other the comfort they all felt in need of. All their talk was about papa. Maurice took a map, and, with a feeling and show of considerable importance, let Charles see the route the 'Amelia' would follow on her voyage to Calcutta.

It would be pleasant if there was no sadness in the world. It would not be needed in stories then, and it would find no place in histories. It would be so pleasant to have to tell of Maurice, and Charles, and Cecilia—whom all, I am sure, have begun to love—as awaiting the prosperous return of their papa after a short absence, and, all the time, as happy and content as they were dutiful and beautiful. But histories are not stories, and stories are not fables. Life is full of difficulties. Difficulties are nearly allied to misfortunes; and it would be unwise to keep the young from such gentle instruction in this sad truth as story

or history may supply before they encounter it in themselves.

Well ; when Mr. Halley arrived in Calcutta, he found himself a ruined man. The agent he had trusted had proved unworthy of his confidence ; and all the available profits of a long life of arduous toil were scarcely sufficient to preserve the credit of the house of Halley. This dreadful news was rendered all the darker to poor Mrs. Halley, that her husband added to all its sad details an intimation that he had resolved not to come home, but to stay abroad and accept the hospitality and protection a friend had offered him.

Would that all this were only the invention of a fable ! But, no ! misfortunes are on us when they are least in our thoughts. If those children could have read their mother's heart at the very crisis of this calamity, they would have learned a little of how much they were beloved.





CHAPTER II.

MRS. HALLEY'S grief was overwhelming, but it was all on account of her children. Whenever her sorrow found a voice, it was an inquiry, how she was to get them brought up? Ruined, and not seeing how she could make any of her own resources available to procure the necessary means, would she ever be able to follow out the plan of education sketched for the children by their father? And poor little Cecilia! what was to become of her?

In the meantime, some friends undertook to make the best of what remained of the business at Havre. But it was all to no purpose. Money could not be got when the property was gone. And all the income that could be scraped together was quite unequal to the wants of the family, however much economy Mrs. Halley might exercise. Still there was an attempt to hope that Mr. Halley would succeed in some new endeavour to retrieve fortune and position. But the house at Ingouville had to be sold. Mrs. Halley

rented modest apartments in Havre ; and there being no more need of a staff of servants, they had all to be parted with. But Sally, the faithful nurse, still vigorous and active at sixty, could neither go nor be let go. So she accumulated upon her own willing heart and hands all the duties of nurse, cook, house-maid, and lady's-maid. As for Jacob, the good old negro, it was useless to think of dismissing him. He took the matter in his own hands, and said,—‘Me not go. Me remain with good missus and little missus. Me die at de door, if me not allowed to come into de house.’

Mrs. Halley neither wished nor tried to be rid of this faithful creature. She knew how necessary his services were to the children. With tears in her eyes, she told Jacob to stay, and could not help smiling at his quaint and touching speech. With what impatience did they all await the arrival of a mail from India ! Mrs. Halley and the children were always hovering about the jetty to see every steamer that arrived. The appearance of one in the harbour was always an excuse for the revival of a hope. Then they would go home and try to be calm till the postman came round with the letters. With their eyes fixed on the pendulum they would count the seconds till he rang the bell. Then both mother and children would give a start, however much they expected it. Maurice and Charles would rush to the postman, and both make a grasp at the letter, and the one who was fortunate enough to get hold of it, would bring it to his mother with the

triumphant air of a conqueror. In this manner matters shaped themselves tolerably. But it was difficult in Mrs. Halley's circumstances to take short views of things. And she could not help reflecting what a time it would be before her husband would be able to realize some money and send it home to his family.

The children were growing. The boys had to go to school now, for private tuition was too expensive. Cecilia stayed at home, but as yet she only played herself by her mother. She had no longer an opportunity of making the circuit of a large drawing-room, riding on the back of Jacob, and amusing herself with his leaping and shouting. But the inventive Jacob fell upon a great many things that would please his little mistress. Already he had made a careful collection of pretty shells to be found along the beach, and great was Cecilia's admiration of them. Jacob ornamented her doll's house with some of these shells. Between him and Cecilia the clock in the dining-room was richly bordered with shells of a rosy hue. In fact, the good negro had quite a genius for pleasing children. Cecilia's pride was Jacob's shoulder, on the days on which they took long walks under the affectionate care of him and Sally.

Letters from India arrived less and less frequently. The last one, however, had held out some hope that they were not to be astonished if they received an early visit. Mr. Halley did not specify any time, but while giving his wife and children what encouragement he



Cecilia's pride was Jacob's shoulder.—Page 12.

could, he left them to indulge in the expectation of a surprise, which would speedily drive away the memory of his absence and all the pain it had cost them. Still a year slipped over without their hearing any further word of the wanderer. About this time, Mrs. Halley read in the papers or heard of a shipwreck on the coast of Ceylon, and henceforth a fixed belief took possession of her mind that her husband had perished in it.

Indeed, from the day on which Mrs. Halley learned of this shipwreck, the signs of a fatal consumption began to be painfully manifest in her. The sight of the harbour and every sound of a storm awoke terrors in her which the doctor and her friends had no means of allaying. Accordingly, they all concluded that if this unfortunate lady, in whom they all took such an interest, continued to stay in Havre, it would be at the imminent risk of her life. Mrs. Halley could not help knowing the danger she was in, but she strove anxiously not to acknowledge it even to herself. Occasionally she would let her heart speak for itself to the quick and ready sympathies of the faithful old nurse. And Sally had always some wise words of hope to set against the too real fears of the mistress she loved.

‘Well, ma’am,’ Sally would say, ‘I feel, as sure as I am alive, that master is not dead. Nothing can make me give over hoping. And my heart has never played me any tricks yet. And wherever he is, he is not forgetful of us. He is not content and happy, I am certain of that. I believe the poor dear gentleman is at this

moment suffering very much from the thought that he is forced to have even the appearance of forgetting us.'

'And my poor children,' Mrs. Halley would reply, changing the subject as if she had no wish to weaken the force of the argument of Sally's heart, 'how do you think I shall succeed in getting them settled? What profession do you think would suit them?'

'I really don't know, ma'am. But I know this, that my father died and left my poor mother with seven children; that in a short year she followed him into the other world, and left us poor orphans all alone, and that to this good hour of the day we have all been provided for. God is kind, ma'am. There is no danger of Him forgetting us.'

The faith of the good old woman was a prop to the courage of Mrs. Halley. And as often as she gazed upon Cecilia's bright and joyous looks, the mother had still sweet smiles for her child. There is nothing more certain than that in this world things don't come to pass as we propose or expect. The world is full of surprises of joy or of sorrow. Who could have foreseen that a distant cousin, a lady whom Mrs. Halley scarcely knew, would fortunately leave her heir to a small inland estate in Touraine, at the very time when the sea-air of Havre was becoming more than her failing health could stand! One morning the postman brought a letter from Tours. None of the family had any correspondence with that town. Mrs. Halley opened the letter with a degree of feeling she could not account for, and this

emotion deepened very much and equally unaccountably when she read the heading, 'Office of [Mr. Delorme, Notary.' It would be difficult to tell what thought took possession of her mind at the time ; but she said to Maurice,—

' Read it first yourself, and tell me what it is about.'

Maurice had scarcely begun reading when he said aloud,—

' Not at all, mother, I shall read it out, listen :—

' " MADAM,—I have the honour to inform you that Mrs. Eugenia Lemay, a cousin of your grandmother, has left you by her will a country-house, situated at St. Ragonde, near Tours, in the department of Indre-and-Loire. This legacy comprises two vineyards, and you can enter upon possession from this date. The succession-dues are paid in advance.—Believe me, Madam," ' etc.

' This is the doing of God !' exclaimed Sally in a sort of ecstasy of reverent triumph. ' Neither more nor less than a country-house in Touraine, in the middle of the garden of France, in that country to which everybody who can goes to for the sake of the air ! You see, ma'am, that whatever it was that told me not to despair, it hasn't been a will-o'-the-wisp !'

Mrs. Halley could do nothing but weep for joy. She let the children have their own way while they were burying her with kisses. The children could all understand the benefit of this inheritance, but its special charm was that it would be good for mamma.

Jacob and Sally were for packing up and being off that very day. But they soon saw that this would not do. It was January. Sally was thinking of this when she remarked what a handsome New-Year's gift the mistress had got. And after she got the eagerness of her own impulse under command, she was the first to point out all the difficulties of a removal at this time of the year. Supposing the change made as successfully as it was possible, it would be sure to be hurtful to the mistress, who seemed to be growing weaker every day. So they resolved to stay in Havre till the spring.





CHAPTER III.

MAURICE was sixteen years of age. How time rushes on ! He was now old enough—in heart if not in years—to feel and exercise the responsibilities of the male head of his family. He resolved to go and see Mr. Delorme. He must visit the estate ; and he would require to make all the arrangements necessary to render the journey from Havre to Tours both safe and pleasant for his mother. The imagination of Charles and Cecilia went vigorously to work. Their new house was a noble mansion. Every day a thousand plans for enjoying it and all its surroundings were laid down, and laid aside, since they had plenty to spare. Cecilia would have a swing in a nice avenue so closely planted with beautiful trees that it would be warm and dim at mid-day ; and she would get Jacob to catch all the pretty birds, and put them in fine cages, where they would be far happier than they could be out in the fields, and in the cold, with nobody to feed them, or to praise them for singing.

Mrs. Halley's experience was of a very different kind. Hers had been one of those true lives which advance in age without leaving youth all behind. So she too had her enthusiasm of imagination ; but it was the quiet consolation of a sense of sincere thankfulness for goodness and mercy. How good it was of Mrs. Lemay, a relation so distant, to leave her a home in her present circumstances of failing health and vanished wealth ! There she could attend still more carefully to her children's education and general training. She would be under no necessity of letting her darlings experience any of those woes of want which leave such traces of sorrow and shades of gloom all through the after life. The young spirit is permanently affected by its atmosphere, whether of want or of wealth.

The winter of 1857 was very rough. For several weeks a disagreeable north-west wind tried the strongest, and terrified the delicate, in Havre. Mrs. Halley did not go out at all. She was apparently declining. Sally, with all her faith unfeigned, began to be a little less confident in her predictions of how far all would yet be well. She did not speak with so much assurance, although she every day kept saying that her heart must tell the truth.

It was not till the middle of March that Maurice found it convenient to visit Tours. He went there, however, and was received by Mr. Delorme with all respect and kindness. The good notary was one of those excellent men not to be met with every day, who

had acquired the secret of preserving his heart sacred from indifference. The evil spirit of this kind of bad heartedness is ever on the alert to assail the men whose lives are devoted to business. It had assailed Mr. Delorme in vain. He received Maurice with cordial good feeling. He told him a great many things about Mrs. Lemay, a client whose memory he respected very much, and how she had been led to appoint his mother her heir.

‘One day—it is a good many years since then’—said Mr. Delorme, ‘Miss Eugenia met your mother, who was only a child, at a house where they were drawing a lottery. Miss Eugenia was not pleased with what she had drawn, and she proposed to several of the young people present to exchange for something she took more of a fancy for. The young ladies refused, and as Mrs. Lemay used to tell me, not very graciously either. And when little Caroline, your mother—as she then was and was called—observed this, she came forward of her own accord, and made offer of a very acceptable exchange. Miss Eugenia was delighted with this attention and the disposition it showed; and she made up her mind that she would, some day or other, give substantial proof of how much value she put upon it. She meant to have done something to show this long ago; but circumstances did not permit her. Indeed Mrs. Lemay never saw your mother after that day. But being left a widow, and having no children, when she learned from a person from Havre about what had befallen your

family, she sent for me, and said,—“I have now an excellent opportunity of showing the same kind of feeling to my little cousin as she showed to me a long time ago. I have not heard of some of my other relations for twenty years. And I have made up my mind to leave my estate here to Mrs. Halley.”

‘The good lady, she has taken everything into consideration beforehand. She has arranged for your mother’s entering on the possession of her little property free from any burdensome taxes or any other drawbacks to begin with. She left in my hands a sum of money for this purpose when she deposited the will with me. If you have no objections, we shall go to-morrow to St. Radegonde, that is the hamlet in which your mother’s new house is situated.’

Mr. Delorme asked Maurice to stay to dinner. Maurice accepted the invitation, and was introduced to the worthy notary’s family. And from that day he was not only a friend, but an established favourite with them all.

Maurice wrote to his mother full particulars of all he heard and saw during this visit. He gave her a glowing description of Tours, and its bridges, and the quays, Royal Street, the Mall, and so many other things, all new and full of fascination to an ingenuous young man. He was, above all things, in raptures about the mildness of the climate. Already, in March, the trees were in blossom. He was quite sure his mother would soon get strong and well again in this beautiful country.

Next day, Mr. Delorme and Maurice went to St. Radegonde. They kept along the embankment of the Loire till they came to a road, up which they plodded vigorously, notwithstanding the fact that it was in a state which might have been a great deal better, considering the time of the year it was. 'It is quite clear,' thought Maurice to himself, while wading through the mud and sinking nearly to the knees in it, 'that our new house is something less than a noble mansion.'

'We might have come to St. Radegonde through St. Symphorien,' said Mr. Delorme, whose thoughts had evidently been different from those of Maurice, 'but we people of Tours are proud of our Loire and its embankment, and I was anxious to let you see what a fine walk we can take. At all events, we are at our journey's end. Here is one of the vineyards which I mentioned in my letter as part of the property,—and a very nice little bit of property it is, as you see. That gray-coloured door to the right there is the entrance to the house.'

As Mr. Delorme and Maurice drew near, a dog began to bark, and the two men who were working in the vineyard made their appearance, and saluted them respectfully, at the same time eying the young stranger attentively from head to foot. The door was open. In a court of moderate size, there stood to the left a house of moderate dimensions. The visitors seemed to have been expected. Dupain, the farmer, had opened the shutters, but he had made no attempt to put things in order. The furniture was thickly laid with dust. And



On this little table she signed her will.—Page 24.

the sun just let into the rooms did not conceal any of the dust that had not settled on the furniture. All this the better. It was exactly that sort of sunshine that Maurice desired for his mother. When Mrs. Lemay's arm-chair was pointed out to him, he gazed on it with tenderness. He thought of the kind lady who had bequeathed to them all this inheritance.

'Mrs. Lemay sat in that corner, and I sat here,' said the notary, 'when she communicated to me her intentions regarding this property. On this little table she signed her will.'

Maurice felt unable to say anything in reply. He felt as if he had been introduced personally to the generous benefactress of his mother, his dear little sister, his brother, and himself. And his gratitude seemed to misinterpret itself. At least, so thought Maurice, while the embarrassment which proper feeling experiences in the presence of a superior and a stranger kept him silent.

The house itself was soon gone over. It contained three rooms on the ground-floor, and two up-stairs. A convenient little kitchen stood on the other side of the court.

They stepped out into the garden which stood in front of the house. Two large fig-trees planted at the garden gate were something new to Maurice, and produced a smile of real satisfaction. Two fine ornamental rose-trees were adornments to the garden, and their buds were just beginning to spread ; two walks, bordered with strawberries, behind which was some neat lattice-work,

led to the bottom of the garden, where there was another fig-tree shading the window of the vine-keeper's cottage. Mr. Delorme and Maurice went into the wine-press, the most important apartment in a wine-grower's establishment. After looking at all the other offices, they entered a large vineyard planted along both sides with almond-trees. The almonds were then in blossom. Now for the first time Maurice began to feel what it was to be a proprietor. He let his eyes wander left and right, and only after a considerable time did he bring himself to say a word, and that single word was, 'Wonderful!'

The notary entered into a great many particulars which need not be recorded here. He understood Maurice's feelings, and with a sense of kindred triumph took him all round the vineyard, and lost no opportunity of awakening in his mind a proper sense of the value of his possessions.

When they came to the other end of the vineyard, Mr. Delorme opened a door, and stepping out on a road planted along both sides with poplars, he said,—

'When you wish to get on to the embankment to go to Marmoutier, or to take a constitutional, you can get out this way.'

Maurice felt the emotions of sadness and gladness both strong within him. He felt with all its significance and importance his title of eldest son of the family. This little property was all his to look after. How should he set about it? He really did not know.

Mr. Delorme seemed to read the thoughts of the in-

genuous youth, who had not yet learned to veil or transmute the living language of his looks. And he said, 'I shall be very glad to give you all the assistance in my power. And I venture to think, if we use the best wisdom my experience may have put at your service, things will not go far wrong.'

Maurice seized the hand which was held out to him, while these words were being uttered, indeed, as a part of the utterance.

While Mr. Delorme and Maurice were thus looking over the little estate, Mrs. Dupain and her daughter Mary had spread a very comfortable meal in the dining-room. It was no repast got up in a hurry and unexpectedly. Ham and eggs were nicely cooked. And there was some fine fresh butter. The peasant of Touraine has no miscellaneous generosity about him. But like all peasants he has a keen instinct of his own interests. And this meal was served up with quite a clear conviction that it was for the new master. Wine of their own making was on the table. And Maurice, in spite of his modesty and inexperience, felt that the grapes had been grown on the estate that was now his, or his mother's, which was all the same. He not only felt this, but he showed that he was in no wise unwilling to acknowledge the feeling by drinking a glass with a sense of the importance of the position he had just acquired.

The weather that day was splendid, and this made the heritage look larger in his eyes. The feeling about


the house not being a mansion was all gone now. St. Radegonde was burnished up with the light of heaven. The pure air, the stillness amid vitality, and that beautiful sun, with health in his beams, all seemed to Maurice so many mercies for his mother.

They left and came round by St. Symphorien, for Mr. Delorme's residence was in that suburb. Our young proprietor hastened to write to his mother the happy issue of his journey. He wrote also that he was coming home without further delay.





CHAPTER IV.

HARLES and Cecilia, under the care of the all-interested Jacob, were waiting for our young traveller at the railway station. It was quite a sight to see the gladness of these three children at being reunited. So pure it was. Maurice had become a very important person in the eyes of his brother and sister. This did not need to be put in so many words. They looked their sense of his importance. He had just returned from a very long journey. Tours was far away, and their brother had been at Tours. To go to Tours he had had to pass through Paris. And to all he had heard and seen they were delighted to listen for hours.

Mrs. Halley was pleased when she learned the exact nature of the modest inheritance her cousin had left her. Had the house been larger, it would have been too large for her to manage. She might, in such a case, have had to sell it. What she wanted was just such a quiet retreat, where she could live within the compass of her limited means. But difficulties intrude themselves

into all our inheritances. Unexpected obstacles arose in Mrs. Halley's reflections on her happy deliverance from pressing want. How was the education of the children to be carried on in the country? This was another opportunity for the force of Sally's simple faith; and she entreated her mistress not to rush faster than the railway train: 'We shall see when we get there,' said the good old nurse.

Mrs. Halley's friends took a kindly and active interest in her preparations for removal. But regrets saddened her joy at leaving Havre. That port of her long, weary expectations, the very sight of which had so often stung her heart with grief, seemed, as the time to leave it drew near, more dear to her than she had ever been aware of.

The spring of that year whose winter had been so rough was mild and beautiful. It was now April, the month in which they used to go to the coast in such spirits. Strangers were flocking in to see and admire the harbour she was leaving without a ray of hope of ever returning to it again.

The novelty was all joy to the two younger children. Ivy affects only walls that are old. The indifference with which Charles and Cecilia abandoned the scenes they had loved so well was complete. They were taking their treasures with them to their new abode. They were not going to be separated from the parrot, the canaries, and the ship which Jacob had rigged.

The journey was got over. Every precaution was

foreseen, and all necessary care was taken for the uncomplaining invalid. They arrived at Tours, where she rested for two days. During these two days Maurice and Sally were at St. Radegonde making everything comfortable for her arrival.

If Maurice had created a sensation when he came to St. Radegonde on his preliminary visit, it was nothing to the interest awakened when a hired carriage, after triumphing over all the ruts and risings of the narrow ill-kept road from St. Symphorien to that little village, stopped at the door of his mother's new abode. Cecilia, leaning out of the carriage window, produced the happiest impression upon the peasants; and when she alighted, with her soft black eyes, her looks bright and beaming with gentleness and kindness, and her auburn hair in curl, she was at once the darling of all, and all smiled their acknowledgment of this feeling.

Mrs. Halley addressed with difficulty a few graceful words to those who received her and her family with such marks of respect. Maurice was already an old acquaintance, and all the 'Good-days' were addressed to him, in full confidence of this being an admitted fact.

Of the new-comers to St. Radegonde, none was the centre of so much wonderment and gaze as Jacob. A negro was something, if not unheard of, at least hitherto unseen, in this hamlet. The peasant children fled in fright; but Sally got hold of one as he attempted, in his alarm, to be off, and said to him, 'My dear boy, his feelings are as white as his face is black. You will

all soon come to like him. There is not a kinder creature among you.'

Sally's speech took considerable effect. Although she did not make them all feel all she meant, she touched upon feelings which would soon rouse themselves up into that respect which Jacob's character never failed to awaken—the faithful old servant that he was.

Sally and Jacob very soon reduced the house to order. Mrs. Halley took possession of the room on the ground-floor, which had the best exposure to the sun. Cecilia's imaginations were a good deal abashed. She expected fine walks, and only found vineyards. But she was easily reconciled to this, as to every other contradiction of her own creations; and she at once got hold of Jacob's hand to take a walk round the vineyards; and before they ended their walk, they had made the acquaintance of the dog and the poultry, and all the denizens of the court and the outer offices.

Charles had one serious difficulty in the way of settling down. There was no water to sail his ship in. Putting it neatly upon a shelf was a very different sort of play from launching it in the large pond he expected. But there was no help for it. There was not a pond to drown a fly in at St. Radegonde, much less to sail the fine large ship which Jacob had built. This absence of water seemed a very different affair to Sally. She could now let Cecilia run about without fear of a drowning catastrophe; and such fear is a very natural product

in the mind of a prudent nurse, whose ward is a lively, rollicking, bounding girl of eight years of age.

Mr. Delorme did not fail of due attention to Mrs. Halley. He at once evinced the same earnest interest in her as he had already shown to Maurice. His advice and assistance were invaluable. And there was no interruption in the education of Maurice and Charles. They were sent to the best school at Tours.

Cecilia had not yet commenced her studies. And authority miscarried in all its attempts to keep the little maiden within doors. With a flopping round hat on her head, she took part in all the out-door occupations of Jacob. For, you must know, Jacob had constituted himself head and under gardener without waiting for orders to that effect. He and Cecilia busied themselves in attention to all the external specimens of animal and vegetable life that seemed to be in any need of their assistance. This was often a source of sore trouble to Sally. She would feel it necessary to search for them far and near. And after she had got the chief object of her solicitude in the house, the little truant would lay herself comfortably down and go asleep on the sofa in her mother's room. That the sofa should be in this room was a special stipulation, since nothing gave Mrs. Halley such pleasure as to gaze on the freshness and brightness of this child of her heart.

It was now six months since the family had settled in their new abode, and it was vintage-time. It is more easy to state these facts than to tell the transports which

the season wrought in the soul of Cecilia. Sally fitted her out in a dress for the occasion. Her skirt was of green drugget, as were those of the peasant girls. And like them, too, she must wear wooden shoes. A red kerchief tied round her head, warm mittens on her hands, a basket on her arm, and a pruning knife to handle, completed our young *closerie's* equipment for the vintage. Thus arrayed she sallied forth with Jacob to set to work, without waiting for the melting of the hoar frost. The morning mist with the sun staring through, as red and as large as a harvest moon, were just the surroundings that were wanted for Cecilia's new sensations. When she arrived at the scene of operations all the vintagers turned round to look at her, and every one had a petting word to say to her.

In the course of the morning Cecilia's basket got filled with the finest grapes, and her nose and her hands got dyed. She also ate up the bread which Sally had slipped into her basket. By-and-by Jacob got her on his back, and pretended to be like to sink under the load. And thus he proceeded home to the door of the dining-room, outrun by the merry ringing laugh of his beautiful burden.

Cecilia ran to her mother to show her well-filled basket, and she bargained for as many kisses as she had grapes.

Everybody hoped Mrs. Halley would recover. She, in her own soul, had given up all hope. She was alone in this despair. How sadly she used to look at her

darlings ! And she spoke of them to herself as her poor orphans. Even Sally often betrayed by her sighs that her hope was dying.

Still, invalid and all as she was, their mother was not away from them. She was not able to busy herself about her children, but they had her to look at, and to kiss and embrace morning, noon, and night. And always when Maurice and Charles came home from school, they had such lots of things to tell their mother of all that happened through the day. And Cecilia had often to run and caress her mother, and speak of her childish joys and sorrows.

This was another severe winter for the poor invalid, and she suffered a great deal. She was evidently sinking every day ; and now all hope was lost to all.

Maurice stayed away from school, and was always at home. It might have been thought, and it would not have been far wrong, that, young as he was, he wished to ripen his experience, and to draw inspiration from the heart of his dying mother, to prepare him for all the duties her death would impose on him.

Soon the doctor began to count the days of her life ; then to number its hours. And at last this best of mothers and meekest of sufferers died in the arms of the gentle Sally, while Maurice and Charles held her hand, and Jacob looked on, his eyes both a-start with grief.

Cecilia was not present at the very last. Mrs. De-lorme had taken her away to the country with the kindly intention that the child should not associate her mother



How sadly she used to look at her darlings!—PAGE 34.
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with death, nor with the gloom of a coffin and a funeral. The child amused herself as well as she could. But this intended kindness turned out to be in some sense cruel. When she came home again and did not find her mother, and seemed to realize for herself that her mother was away never to come back and kiss her any more, her little heart seemed to burst with sorrow. The tender arms of Sally were her refuge, as they had been in infancy. There she was encouraged to weep her fill. There she felt herself protected from the undefined ill that was all around her. Her new black dress frightened her, even after she knew Sally had made it. Maurice and Charles tried to look cheerful to reassure her. They felt their little sister a treasure to be tenderly guarded.





CHAPTER V.

THE death of Mrs. Halley aroused a great deal of active sympathy. People could not help loving the orphans ; and the prevailing feeling was, 'What is to be done for them ? The eldest is still young, and that dear child, she is so engaging. It is heartrending.'

Some people have a charm about them, and they elicit affection even from those whose acquaintance with them is of the most superficial kind. Mrs. Halley was one of these charming individuals. Her neighbours had a real pleasure in visiting her. To take to her some early fruit or a bouquet of their choicest flowers was better than receiving them. Then the mystery about her husband intensified the interest naturally felt in her as a faithful and devoted mother. And above all, Mrs. Halley was the friend of the poor. She, and Sally consulting with her, could always find something to spare out of her limited income for those who had no income at all.

Mr. and Mrs. Delorme's care and affection for the

children knew no limits. The day after Mrs. Halley's funeral, Mr. Delorme went up to St. Radegonde to explain to Maurice a plan he and his wife had formed for their future. At the sight of the good man, Maurice felt his heart relieved. It seemed that, under Providence, their help was to come from him.

'Maurice, my dear boy,' said Mr. Delorme, 'I should like to have you in my office. Do you think you would like it?'

'To be with you, sir, would be the best thing that could happen me,' replied Maurice. 'But I have no influence, and they say that, without influence, it is impossible to succeed in your profession.'

'In general I am in the habit of taking short views of things,' was the notary's answer. 'I never ask how I might cross the Loire if I had no boat. The one thing needful for you just now is a situation. You have received a good education. You have worked hard, and, God bless you, you have been right. I wish you had had less occasion to be so over anxious in your youth as I have observed you to be. I think you had better come to my office. As for Charles, I have been thinking of him too. We had better let him go to school another year. And I shall advise him then to take a situation in Mr. Rose's warehouse. It is one of the best houses in Tours. The situation will be easily procured, and I hope Charles will have no objections to it.'

'But I wished to be a sailor,' said poor Charles; 'and to go to the country where dear papa went to.'

‘My boy,’ said Mr. Delorme, ‘you will get over that feeling. And, you know, you have had no education for being a sailor ; and, what settles it, you are beyond the age at which they admit pupils to be trained for that profession.’

‘Then I will burn my ship,’ said the boy.

‘You mustn’t do that either. Keep it. You will like to think some day of the brave thoughts it awakened in you,’ was the wise reply.

Cecilia was present during all this conversation. Poor child, she was never happy away from her brothers.

When Mr. Delorme left, Maurice told Sally all that had been said. She was pleased beyond expression with Mr. Delorme’s proposals. And she set at once to remove Charles’s objections to entering Mr. Rose’s employment. ‘The Roses are good people,’ was Sally’s line of remark.

‘One morning last winter, when it was so cold, Mrs. Rose met a poor woman who was shivering. What did Mrs. Rose do? Well, she looked to the right, and to the left, and when she saw there was nobody about, she took off her own flannel petticoat and gave it to the poor woman, a working man’s wife, and went on as quietly as if she had done nothing. I should think it a great blessing, Charles dear, to be allowed to enter the door of such people.’

Charles yielded with a good grace. Maurice and Sally had a long conference about household matters.

But Sally's judgment was so sound he never thought of questioning anything she proposed. It was agreed on between them, as to himself, that he should be guided entirely by Mr. Delorme. Sally and Jacob set themselves industriously to their duties. As to Cecilia, the old nurse thought it best to let her run about a little longer. And she undertook to make her read a little every day, as her mother used to do. For Sally was an excellent reader, and, indeed, was very well read for her position in life.





CHAPTER VI.

IN the evening of the same day—the day after their mother's funeral—the two boys sat talking over their various concerns. Cecilia had gone to bed in the next room, and they thought she was asleep ; but the door being open, she heard all they said.

After having gone over all Mr. Delorme's proposals in the morning, and Sally's reasons and rules, Maurice said,—‘But I don't think Cissy should be left with Sally. And Mrs. Delorme says she should go to school. I think I shall send her. Cecilia is nine years old now ; and she cannot read. She amuses us with all her little funny ways, but then she is idle, and will form idle habits. We really can't allow her to run about the fields with Jacob any longer. Don't you think so, Charlie ?’

‘I am sure I do,’ said Charles. ‘We should be very sorry if our little sister grew up a rough country girl. And if ever papa should come home, he would be so disappointed if she was not a lady like mamma.’

Here they heard a slight rustling in the next room ; but it was only for a moment, and the brothers went on with their conversation.

Next morning Cecilia gave Sally no trouble with her usual excuses for lying only a little longer. For, almost the first time in her life, she seemed impatient to get out of bed and be dressed. When she was all ready, she went to Maurice's room and found him busy arranging some papers.

'Have you seen your rabbits, pet?' said Maurice. 'They ought to be lively this fine morning.'

'No, brother ; I wish to speak to you.'

Maurice took her on his knee and looked tenderly at her, and said,—'Well, what is it?'

'Brother, don't send me to school,' said the child, bursting into sobs, and throwing her arms round his neck.

'Cissy, dearie, don't cry. What do you think they do at school?'

Cecilia interrupted Maurice and her own sobs, and said,—'I shall not be with you, if I go to school.'

'But,' Maurice continued, 'perhaps you think it is all work and no play at school. It is not so, dear. There will be such nice little girls who will play with you, after you have learned all your lessons. You will learn music, and drawing, and knitting, like Blanche Delorme. And then you will be able to work such fine slippers for Charles and me. And won't it be nice for us to come home and put on our slippers, and say, "Aren't they beauties, and Cissy worked them!"'



'Brother, I cannot go, and mamma would not have let me go,' was something that had a sound of finality in it, and Maurice began to feel this.

'But what do you mean to do, darling?' he asked. 'Do you wish me to send masters from Tours out here to teach you your lessons?'

'I don't want masters, and I don't need them. You could hear my lessons in the evening, and I should learn them with Sally through the day. Oh, brother dear! I do want to learn to read and to be good.'

'I see,' said Maurice. 'Well, we shall try, and if you go on—'

'I will go on,' said Cecilia, with tears and confidence.

She dried her eyes, and ran to tell Sally that she was not to be sent to school.

Mr. Delorme did not insist on his wife's proposal being carried out. He had noticed that Cecilia was tender and sensitive. He quite agreed with what she said when she asserted that she could not live away from her brothers, and Sally, and Jacob. Mr. Delorme, it is quite apparent, was, in a higher sense than we use the word when we apply it to good men who study science,—a Christian philosopher. He knew that home was better than school for such natures as Cecilia's; and Maurice agreed with him.

In a week, Maurice was settled in Mr. Delorme's office. Every day he walked from St. Radegonde to St. Symphorien. In the office, his modesty, good-manners, and industry were conspicuous. But it is at

home that he is the subject of observation at present, in this story of his fortunes.

At nine years of age, reading was still a mystery to Cecilia. No matter. The thoughtless bright-hearted child had heard something in bed that night, and she made up her mind to penetrate the mystery. Deeply impressed with the authority of Maurice, Cecilia knew if she did not learn at home, she should have to go to school; and now she applied herself to her lessons, under Sally's usherdom, with the same ardour as she had undertaken her various enterprises of glee and fun under the presiding care of the indispensable Jacob.

Sally had thought with grave anxiety that it would not be good for Cecilia to go to school; and now that the matter was settled to her own liking, and according to the plan of her little mistress, she determined that it should not fall through by any fault at home. So four times a day had Miss Cecilia to say her lessons to Sally. But it is not to be supposed that new habits were put on without a pang at throwing off the old ones. This could not be in a nature like Cecilia's. If Jacob happened to pass the window when she was at her lessons, she was up and over to the window, if not to the door. But a word from Sally was all that was needed to remind her that this was the time for her lessons.



CHAPTER VII.

AFTER three months' patience, Cecilia felt she had achieved a glorious victory. She could read. And Charles bought her a new book, a complete history of all the world ; and she read it through with ardour. This was more victory. Sally felt that she deserved some share in the renown. The good old nurse was radiant about advantage gained and expenses saved.

This first success had a visible influence upon the spirit and bearing of Cecilia. She could now let Jacob pass the window without bounding over to it. Sally lengthened her dress a little, and the spirited child became a charming girl.

The tender embraces of her brothers when they came home of an evening, seemed to reverse Cecilia's original plea for not going to school. It was now they who could not do without her.

Maurice was a capital writer ; and he devoted half an hour every evening to training his little sister to this indispensable art. She was now a-head of Sally ; for

Sally, however well she could read, could not write. The copy-book, the pen, and the ink were Cecilia's pride and Sally's peculiar care. For the fact that Sally did not know how to make any useful application of the ink, rendered her not quite so deft in handling it. If she could not write, she knew that a blot was not good writing ; and she was just a little severe against blots. So that Cecilia would have whole pages of her copy without a blot, and she never soiled her dress or her fingers with ink. She learned very quickly to write a very good hand. 'You see, brother,' she would say, 'how well you teach me ; and I am glad to have you to teach me, and not Blanche Delorme's writing-master with his spectacles on.'

She gave all the credit to her brother. He thought only of her, and he felt it necessary to reduce her lessons to something like system. He taught her a little sacred and ancient profane history. And it was rather difficult for Cecilia to hold her tongue while he was teaching.

But all her time was not spent over books. Some good romping for young mistress, at the right time, was one of Sally's regulations and Jacob's chief refreshments. And Cecilia had her own little garden to dig and to water. She had also a family of white rabbits. Whatever food in the way of herbs or leaves they required was procured by her own hand. Sometimes also she allowed them to hop about on the main-walk of the vineyard ; and this indulgence occasionally caused her a

good deal of trouble in getting them out from the trees and into their house again.

Cecilia had other pleasures in the country. Jacob was now a first-rate gardener. And he had the skill of his race in the nature of simples. He used to pick them out in company with Cecilia, and tell her all the cures he knew they had effected in his own country. When the corn was golden, Jacob used to take Cecilia to gather blue-bottles and wild poppies. At first she wondered very much at the idea of making medicines out of flowers. She thought their only, or rather their highest, use, was to make garlands for girls' heads. Every instance of ignorance on her part added to Jacob's sense of his own usefulness. If she trampled on a marsh-mallow, he would stop her, and with the air of a learned professor, instruct her in the wonderful virtues of this particular herb.

It was in this manner that Cecilia acquired a knowledge of which she, later on in life, let many of the poor have the benefit. Between Sally and Jacob she was early taught to value, and how to use, the treasures which the liberal hand of God has scattered over the fields and along the hedge-rows.

Pruning the vine, sowing corn, and planting the kitchen garden were more of Cecilia's accomplishments.

All her teachers—Maurice, Sally, and Jacob—had good reason to be well pleased with their pupil. No doubt she would sometimes yawn while Maurice was explaining a rule of grammar. But he knew how to waken up the

attention of his pupil, by reading passages from the history of Joseph, or Saul, or Daniel, who were three of Cecilia's heroes in sacred history. By-and-by Hannibal and Coriolanus were favoured with her intense admiration. An excellent memory and a vigorous intellect were the means of a progress in his little sister which very much astonished Maurice.

At the sametime, little Cecilia was growing a big girl. Something a little more abstract was now considered level to her capacity. In about a year after she had entered on her school education at home, the catechism was added to her other lessons. Her mother had been a religion to Cecilia, but Sally was her first religious teacher in any formal sense of the term. The good old woman's living piety and kindness were a constant lesson to the heart of her docile scholar. Nay, the reverent faith of the old negro, his diligence in every duty, his devotion to the family, were silent influences on the open heart of the eager child. But Maurice determined that she should go down to St. Symphorien to get more regular religious instruction from a good lady, who devoted an hour three times a week to the spiritual welfare of any little girls who would come to her house. Here Cecilia would have the advantage of mixing with other girls of her own age. And regularly did she accompany her brother to town on the days of these lessons which the excellent lady, Mrs. Carter, made so interesting. This experience soon told on Cecilia. It is good for children to encounter children. Cecilia used always to

be the first to arrive at Mrs. Carter's. At the beginning of her visits she was a little backward. To take a place among other girls was altogether new to her. She watched their ways, listened to the questions and answers, began to pick up a little confidence, and, before long, she ranked as the readiest and aptest pupil of them all. They all loved her, for she inherited her mother's charm. New joys were Cecilia's portion for attending this class. She arranged, by-and-by, that her young class-fellows should come out and spend an occasional fine day with her at St. Radegonde. Such were high days and holidays; and when she marched them all out, she would dart forward to Sally, and give her a list of their names, and a hurried account of all their excellencies, before they came in to receive the good old woman's smiles and blessing. Then after refreshment, out they all went into the vineyard. Games were organized, and Jacob superintended the swing. While they were playing, Sally was getting ready the dinner; which, if the sun was not too hot, was served up to them in the garden. Cecilia was always most active at the table. Sally, no doubt, sat at the head of the table, but Cecilia helped her little companions to bread, filled their cups with milk, and offered them fruit. She was, and looked, a little queen on those bright days, although she made no attempt at seeming it. Her garden, her canaries, and her rabbits, were all visited, reviewed, and admired. When it was the season a basket of strawberries, gathered by herself in the morning, did not fail to be produced. If any of



Jacob superintended the swing.—Page 50.

her fellow-pupils did not care for strawberries, she had the run of the garden to gather what she pleased.

This regular visit to St. Symphorien was Maurice's idea. It was a good one, and the effects of it on his little sister were excellent. The most amiable child will become selfish if it is not brought into judicious contact with other children. Selfishness is greedy. Its activity is receiving. But to give and to receive are both necessary to health of the spirit. And a child cannot be thus exercised unless in the company of other children.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE memory of their father and mother was tenderly cherished by the three orphans. Maurice received fifty pounds a year from Mr. Delorme. Charles was now in the counting-house of Mr. Rose's place of business. His duties were but slight as yet, still they were such as enabled him to add a few pounds yearly to the family's income. Cecilia was growing and developing, beautiful to behold, and more beautiful in the mind and heart unseen. The thought of their father was never for any length of time absent from the minds of these three children. What would they not give to hear from him, or even to learn about him ! Long would they sit, and many were the affecting guesses and surmises they made about him. Another subject of anxiety often engrossed the thoughts of the brothers. How were the accomplishments of a lady's education to be procured for Cecilia ? The apparent hopelessness of the question, in the meantime, saddened Maurice especially. They would both have been so delighted to hear her play, and

to listen to her singing, with the graces of art added to the charm of her naturally fine voice. And then she had such an excellent memory ; and how they would have liked to see it exercised upon the learning of the various languages, so necessary to any approach to completeness in her education. Their regrets were all the greater that Cecilia had shown much aptness in learning the English language, when her mother used to give her simple lessons in it ; and the boys knew that it was the foreign tongue most necessary to a French young lady. Charles was always hopeful that these defects would be in some way or other made up. Indeed his faith in the return of their father seemed strongest, at least it was most frequently expressed. Often the sight of a stranger would make him start, so impressed was he with the thought that his father would reappear in some unexpected way.

A subject which was occupying Cecilia's mind a good deal about this time was, that it was time she was rendering Sally a little more active assistance in household duties. It was quite apparent to her that Sally, in spite of all her efforts to conceal it, was becoming a good deal less nimble. As for Jacob, he seemed as if he had some secret of renewing the youth of his energies. He was everywhere,—in the field, in the vineyard, in the court, in the house. He had a way of his own of trimming the vines, but it was a way that told on the increase of the grapes. And when the old man wished to attract the notice of his young mistress, he

would sing a negro melody, and Cecilia would go up beside him, not only to listen to him but also to gratify him.

At twelve years of age, a girl who has her parents alive is still treated with a good many of the attentions bestowed on a child. Only want, or some equally urgent pressure, could ever make parents wish to hurry their daughter out of childhood. The wish is that she might preserve the character of a child as long as possible.

But Cecilia had no parents. She lived all day with a faithful old servant. Her brothers were at home in the morning, and they never stayed out of an evening, but the long day was dull. Whenever the weather permitted it, Cecilia used to go and meet Maurice. And if at any time Charles had a message to go in the evening, Cecilia and Maurice would join him, or if not, they would way-lay him on the embankment of the Loire, to his joyful surprise.

One day Sally said to Cecilia, 'My child, I hear that you are better educated than any of the girls you see at St. Symphorien. And I know that you know more about gardening and vintage than all of them. But I want you to become a real mistress of the house, to be able to cook, and especially to sew; for you see my poor old hands begin to swell a little, and money saved is money gained. I knew, where I came from, three sisters of good family, and although they had not a very large income, they lived very well, because they made

all their own dresses, bonnets, and under-clothing. You would never see a tear in any of the curtains or hangings in their house. Miss Fanny used to make the blinds and screens for the windows, mend the chairs, and make her brother's vests.'

'Oh, I should like to make vests for Maurice and Charles,' said Cecilia, leaping all at once over all obstacles into this new occupation. 'Is it difficult, Sally?'

'A little difficult, dear,' said Sally; 'I think more difficult than you find learning what you call grammar to be. But I think I shall be able to teach you.'

'Oh, mamma would have been so pleased if she had known I could make vests for Maurice and Charles,' glowed out of Cecilia's heart over her tongue. 'Wasn't she a beautiful sewer?'

'Ay, she could sew and embroider dresses for her children, she could. It was good to see her with the large scissors cutting out shapes for the house-maid to make up,' said Sally in a tone of reverence. 'She had everything in her work-basket.'

'I should like to have a work-basket,' was Cecilia's very natural remark.

'You shall have mamma's, dear,' said Sally. 'I put it by with care; for I have known, for a long time, that days pass quickly over, and I thought it would not be long till it was needed for you. And now you see the time is come. Let me see your pretty hands. Now, there! you will be a clever sewer, like your mamma.'

Cecilia told Maurice in the evening about this conversation with Sally. Maurice was quite delighted. Sally's economy was well known to him ; and he knew how important it was that Cecilia should learn this great lesson of life from one who knew it so well. And there was this further to be considered, and it did not fail to present itself to the thoughtful mind of Maurice, that sewing and embroidering would, in the meantime, be accomplishments for Cecilia, and perhaps by the time that she was pretty proficient in them, the other accomplishments would be within reach.

The next day Charles bought and brought home a present for Cecilia. It was an English case of scissors, thimble, and needles. This was the first article of luxury that had been brought into that house since it became theirs. But how could Charles help it? Cecilia was twelve years of age, and she was entering on a new line of enterprise.

It was a beautiful morning in the spring of 1863. The lilies, the roses, and the mignonnette were shedding their sweet breath to add to the harmony of beauty all around. The canaries and the goldfinch had their cages outside of the window, and all the birds on the trees and in the house were celebrating the return of the sunny joys of summer. And Cecilia sat down beside Sally to learn the first elements of the mystery of the needle. And her first lesson was, not to work letters of the alphabet in a sampler, but to perform some operations on a pair of Jacob's stockings.

The mistress and the pupil chatted and worked away. Sally told stories, grave and gay. Cecilia had a habit of turning every conversation like this into one about her father. She did not speak so much about her mother. Indeed, she never had since she was taken to see her tomb. There was a mystery about it she shrunk from. She did not like to put questions, for she did not hope for answers. And yet she needed hope; and there was some hope about her father. No news had ever come affirming or confirming his death; and Cecilia would not believe that her father was dead.





CHAPTER IX.

MRS. DELORME felt quite as much interest in the children at St. Radegonde as her husband. On several occasions she had asked Maurice to bring his sister with him to dinner. Cecilia's age had always been a sufficient excuse for respectfully declining these invitations. But now she was entering on her fourteenth year, and Mrs. Delorme having renewed her invitation, Maurice felt he could not well decline the honour intended for himself and his sister any longer.

Cecilia was accustomed to the greatest simplicity in her dress; and on this occasion she did not pay any excessive attention to her toilette. She tied up her beautiful hair with ribbons of scrupulous neatness and taste; and when she was introduced to the other young ladies at Mrs. Delorme's, and saw all their variety of gaiety and device in every kind of toilette, trimming, and expense, she was not so much confused as surprised. Mrs. Delorme showed her the most affectionate attention. This tender mother would willingly have

exchanged the expensive dress her daughter had on for Cecilia's simple one, if her darling could have put on with the new dress the freshness and charm of Cecilia's looks.

When young people, especially girls, get together for a first time, intimacy forms with a rush. There is little beating about the bush. The most direct questions are put, with the intention that they should be answered. It certainly was not the first time that the friends of Blanche Delorme had heard of Cecilia Halley. But it was the first time they had met; and the conversation took shape as follows :—

Louisa. How old are you?

Cecilia. Nearly fourteen.

Louisa. I was thirteen this morning. Do you play the piano?

Cecilia. No.

Louisa. You draw then?

Cecilia. No.

Louisa. But I can play on the piano, and I am going to commence drawing with Mr. Adam. I am studying English. Are you?

Cecilia. Mamma used to teach me English when I was quite a little thing; but I have forgotten it all. I mean to learn it, however.

Laura. I have a German governess, and I am going to Dresden next year.

Louisa. You don't like music, Miss Halley, nor drawing, then?



Hand-in-hand they danced a merry round.—Page 62.

Cecilia was not allowed to answer this question, put in the form of a direct negation ; for Amelia summoned them all to the foot of the garden to see a bird's nest she knew was there. But the conversation left a throbbing weight at Cecilia's heart. Afterwards they went to get some fruit, and cake, and milk ; and a good while after that a dance was proposed.

'I shall be Cecilia's partner,' said Bertha. Cecilia allowed her to take her hand, and Louisa played on the piano a fashionable quadrille, and played it very well indeed. All at once, Amelia broke away from her place in the quadrille, and said, 'Oh ! a dance in the room is tiresome ; I like better to dance a round in the garden.'

Amelia had observed that Cecilia was not used to dancing ; and she opened the door of the dining-room, and bounded away out singing. Amelia's heart was large and good. When they got to the garden, hand-in-hand they danced a merry round. The ginging and ever round-and-round seemed only to deepen the young damsels' breath for more. At last Amelia began to show signs of weariness, and Cecilia, after taking a few long breaths, said, 'Shall I sing a roundelay our good old negro, Jacob, taught me when I was quite little ? I sing it sometimes to please him.'

The proposal was carried by acclamation. And Cecilia sang with a voice of such sweetness and flexibility as astonished even Louisa. Mrs. Delorme came out, and Cecilia had to sing it again.

‘What a pity you have not been with a singing-master,’ said Agatha.

But the sage remark of Agatha was lost in the sonorous kiss which Amelia was giving to Cecilia. These two girls were friends. Their hearts were linked. When Cecilia got home again to St. Radegonde, she told Maurice all about the goodness and kindness of Amelia.

‘I should like so much to see her sometimes, brother,’ was direct from her soul.

‘We shall invite her out some day by-and-by, dear,’ said Maurice.

That night in bed, before she could go to sleep, Cecilia had a great many things to think of. She did not for a moment think that Louisa and Agatha intended to grieve her.

‘Do I like music and drawing?’ said Cecilia to herself. ‘I did not like to tell them that I had drawn my rabbits, and that I had painted a portrait of Jacob. But if I had not been so idle, I might have learned more English from mamma.’

At Cecilia’s age tears bring sleep. She slept soundly that night, and she awoke unusually glad at heart in the morning.





CHAPTER X.

NEXT day, Cecilia was out in the garden with Jacob, when a knock at the outer-door told of a visit from a stranger. Jacob went to open the door, and a handsome-looking gentleman, with fine moustaches, entered, leading a young lady by the hand. Cecilia rushed to meet her. It was Amelia.

Mr. Drury said,—‘ I have brought my little girl to see you, Miss Halley. She says she loves you very much, and she would not let me alone till I brought her. I shall leave her till the evening, if she will not be in your way. I have business at Rochecorbon, and I shall call for Amelia on the way home.’

‘ You are very kind, sir,’ said Cecilia ; ‘ I thank you very much indeed.’

Amelia was introduced to Sally, and she, in quality of upper nurse, kissed Miss Drury on the cheek. After Amelia had taken off her things, she came into the room and found that Cecilia had taken up her work till she was ready.

'You did not make this body?' said Amelia, handling the piece of work which Cecilia had laid down at her entrance.

'O yes,' said Cecilia.

'How clever you are! How neat it is behind! and these pearl buttons look so pretty! I wish I could sew, but it must be tiresome; is it not?' were exclamations, a remark, and an interrogation, uttered with all manner of lively looks and gestures.

'It is not at all tiresome,' replied Cecilia. 'At least it is not so with our Sally. We see the sky, and look at the flowers, and I think of—'

'You shall think another time, let us have a run in the vineyard,' was Amelia's characteristic interruption.

While they were romping about in the vineyard, Sally went out to look at them, and the sight awakened a good deal of tenderness within her.

'Dear angel,' she said, apostrophising Cecilia in her heart, 'this is a little of the joy suited to your age.' Then looking with interest at Amelia, she remarked to herself, 'What a fine child that Amelia is. Her carriage is quite that of a young lady. And her father had a military air. I should take him for a general.'

'You were so good to think of coming to see me,' said Cecilia to her friend. 'I was saying to Sally that we would need to make some effort to form your acquaintance.'

'I loved you all at once,' said the direct Amelia. 'We are of the same age, your mamma is dead, and so is mine.'

‘You have your papa,’ said Cecilia tenderly.

‘Your papa is dead, isn’t he?’ was Amelia’s very natural question, seeming to expect the answer, yes.

‘We do not know that,’ said Cecilia measuredly; ‘it is eight years since we heard of him.’

‘It is not certain that he is dead, then!’ was a burst which brightened up Amelia as it escaped from her. ‘I have read a good deal in histories about people coming back again after they were believed to be lost. And I have read about shipwrecks, and about people getting thrown on a lonely island, and remaining there a long, long time, till some fine day a French ship comes to the island, takes them on board, and brings them home again to France.’

‘I hope God will make that the end of our history,’ said Cecilia, with the purest religious fervour. And, child as she was, turning from the subject, she added, ‘You were so kind to me at Mrs. Delorme’s the other day.’

‘Well, I saw you were in a difficulty, and I changed the conversation, that was all,’ rattled out Amelia. ‘And when I got home, I told papa how much I should like to have you for a companion. And he, good, kind papa that he is, said, “You are right, and we will go and call on Miss Halley.” That was all he said, but I knew he meant it. You know papa is very low spirited sometimes, but I am always with him. And I can see in his eyes when he is pleased. And I know he was so pleased when he was bringing me up to St. Radegonde to-day.’

The contract of friendship had been sufficiently worded by all this, and now it was sealed and ratified by a few not very diplomatic kisses.

Amelia mentioned that her father had an estate at Rochecorbon, and she added that it would be so nice, if Cecilia and her brothers would come out and spend a day with her there before long. Papa would come and fetch them.

These first hours of intimacy were fleet on wing. The arrival of Mr. Drury took the girls by surprise. And they parted under promise to see each other very soon again.

It was a real pleasure to Maurice and Charles when they learned what a happy day Cecilia had enjoyed owing to the visit of Mr. Drury and his daughter. The brothers knew that, with all her precocity, Cecilia had still a large amount of the simplicity of a child about her. She needed to play, and to talk like a child, and to hear stories drawn from other stores, as well as those of Jacob and Sally.

But Amelia lived at Tours. And although it was quite convenient for Mr. Drury to bring her to St. Radegonde, it was not so easy for Cecilia to pay return visits. Her duties at home were on the increase. She was not slow to find something to do. Neck-ties, handkerchiefs, linens, all passed now through Cecilia's hands. And she finished with her fourteenth year a new vest for Charles.



CHAPTER XI.

IF the house at St. Radegonde was humble, it had never known want. Thus far, it had rather a feeling of plenty about it. The field, the garden, and the meadow had multiplied their wealth under the skilful hands and the vigour of Jacob. Maurice had now sixty pounds a year, and Charles had thirty, and he had the promise of an early rise in his salary.

But there was a sad thought in the heart of every member of that family at the beginning of Cecilia's fifteenth year. It was one thought more of sadness besides that ever flowing on about their father. It was the time of the *conscription*. And Sally had explained to Cecilia how Maurice would have to draw his lot, and how his lot might be to leave them and join the army, which it was their duty to keep fully supplied with suitable young men. Cecilia had seen soldiers marching, she knew that they had a garrison at Tours, and she had heard of their going to war. But only now did she begin to feel something of what all this might mean.



She had never thought that Maurice or Charles might be under the necessity of leaving her to become one of those soldiers. And the information that, if Maurice drew the fatal lot at this time, he might find a substitute for a sum of money, did not lessen her concern and sorrow.

If Mr. Halley's death had been confirmed, Maurice would have been exempted from service as an orphan. But it was not so ; and the great day came. Maurice kissed Cecilia, shook hands kindly with Sally and Jacob, and went away to Tours resolute in mind and firm in step. In an hour after he left, Sally and Cecilia were on the road to Tours. They could not rest at home while interests so dear to them were exposed to chance in the town, which seemed this day so near at hand. When they had got into Tours, a band of youths on their way to draw the lot passed them singing, and Cecilia clung to Sally's arm.

'Let us go into the cathedral, and pray to God to have pity on us,' said Cecilia.

But she had scarcely got inside the church when she wished to come out again ; and Sally yielded to her restless feelings, to comfort her. They went up and down the streets, and Sally tried sometimes to interest Cecilia in the shop windows : Cecilia had often shown a disposition to buy some little thing she saw in a shop ; but not to-day. Not a farthing would she hear of being spent on her. Oh ! how she wished that day to be rich, that she might feel confident she could pay for a

substitute for her brother. But Sally checked this feeling, by reminding her that, in that case, perhaps she might be depriving some other little sister of her brother.

‘It is very cruel to separate brothers and sisters in this way. They have surely no pity. Why should there be wars to kill one another in, and to get their arms and legs taken off?’ were a few of Cecilia’s expressed reflections; and she was weeping, if not slightly sobbing, as she spoke.

Just then a young lieutenant of cavalry rode past on horse-back at a trot.

‘See there,’ said Sally, ‘how that young gentleman sits on his horse. He has never been at the wars, and perhaps never will be. Perhaps, even if Maurice does draw a bad lot, he may never have to leave us.’

These considerations pacified Cecilia a little. At the suggestion of Sally, they returned to St. Radegonde; and just when they turned the corner of the road that led up to their house, they saw Jacob running towards them as fast as his old limbs would allow, and giving the most unmistakable signs of boundless joy, while he was panting like a railway engine up an incline, till he came near enough to shout, ‘Massa no go and leave us.’ Cecilia left Sally and bounded into the house.

‘Don’t cry, darling,’ said Maurice, taking her in his arms, ‘I am not going to leave you.’

'Quite sure?' said Cecilia, who did not like his looks.

'Quite sure,' was the embarrassed answer.

'Why then look so sad, brother?' struck home.

Maurice kept silence, but could not keep a certain little tear in its prison-house.

'Are you quite sure you are not to go and become a soldier, brother?' reiterated Cecilia.

Sally saw there was something wrong, and had to sit down in a chair before she could begin to give any expression to her feelings.

'Tell me how it is, Maurice,' she said in a tone of kindness and firmness, which reminded him of her voice and manner just at the crisis of their fortunes when his mother died.

'It is sad enough,' said Maurice; 'I drew a bad lot, and Mr. Delorme found a substitute; but I don't know how we can stand the terms.'

'If you are not going away,' said Cecilia, 'we shall not trouble ourselves about the terms. But what are they?'

'I must leave the half of my pay with Mr. Delorme till I have repaid what he laid out to procure a young man for my place,' was the gloomy answer.

'And why are you sad, brother?' asked Cecilia.

'Why is he sad?' said Sally, with some degree of anger in her looks and tones; 'Mr. Delorme is a very hard man to make Maurice pay back the money.'

‘Well, don’t say that either, Sally,’ was Maurice’s reply, wishing to justify his master, while he understood and honoured the feelings of the good old nurse.

Cecilia had to say something for Sally, so she threw in—‘Oh, she does not want you to pay so much money.’ And she went and leaned against Sally’s breast.

The scene that followed was interesting. It was a council of ways and means, and Jacob was called in, as he always was when financial questions were under discussion. Jacob took a hopeful view of the situation. The fruit had never been so fine as it promised to be this season. He would go and sell it in the English quarter. And the nice young English misses would not grudge him double the price he had got for the fruit of any season yet.

Sally’s feeling about Mr. Delorme was not quite just. Mr. Delorme was not a hard man. He had made a considerable fortune by hard labour. He wished Maurice to reach the same end by similar means. He loved the St. Radegonde family. He never could have allowed Maurice to be taken from them. But he did not wish the young man to forget such a great event in his youthful experience, as having drawn a bad lot in the conscription, at such a critical time in the fortunes of the little colony which he had countenanced and counselled from the beginning. And the regular payment of instalments of

this money would keep this escape from an unlucky situation long enough before his mind, to allow it to produce a lasting and wholesome impression.

‘If he had kept all your salary together, I should not have complained,’ said Cecilia, as she threw her arms around her brother’s neck.





CHAPTER XII.

THE economy and industry of Jacob, and a season very favourable to fruits and crops, had made the income of the family at St. Radegonde a little more than the outlay. The autumn that year was delightful. The vintage promised better than it had ever done. And, although Jacob went to town three times a week and sold his fruit, there was never any want of fruit necessary for the table at home.

Cecilia used to walk out between her brothers, taking an arm of each. The happiness of these young people seemed to communicate itself to the hearts of those who saw them pass.

‘What a pity it would have been if Mr. Maurice had been obliged to leave them,’ the vintagers often remarked. ‘And yet he ran a very great risk. Ah ! well, so much the better for everybody that he had not to go. He is a good master.’

Cecilia kept close to her studies. Amelia supplied her with abundance of books. Mr. Drury’s library was

well stocked with every sort of book that Cecilia would care to read.

One day Amelia came on her unexpectedly, as she was engaged in a way that had been becoming more frequent of late. She was drawing.

Amelia. You draw, then, Cecilia?

Cecilia. I am taking a sketch of the rabbits.

Amelia. Let me see. Have you done all this yourself? Without any assistance?

Cecilia. O yes.

Amelia. But you should go to a master, dear. Your grouping is very fine.

Cecilia. A master! my dear Amelia, what are you thinking of?

Amelia. I am thinking of what is quite possible. Mr. Steven is kindness itself. And he would be only too glad to have you visiting his studio. I don't see why you should blush when I speak of this. You surely would not be ashamed to be taught by such a master?

Cecilia. Certainly not. But don't you see that if I devote so much time to the amusement of drawing, I shall interfere with more necessary studies. To go to the town would interfere also with my household duties. Sally is getting old, and—

'I am very sorry,' was Amelia's interruption, and a true interpretation of her feelings.

'But you should not be sorry. I am very happy,' said Cecilia, and she looked very happy. 'I think I



I am taking a sketch of the rabbits.—Page 76.

have some talent for drawing. I know mamma had. But drawing is a thing one can learn at any time. Some day, perhaps, we shall be a little better off, and Maurice and Charles will not grudge me a drawing-master. But since you have got into my secret, I will show you all my drawings. I have been laying by the best of them for the last three years.'

Amelia was kept on the stretch of wonderment as she saw turned out, one after another, from an old portfolio, outlines of animals, a drawing of the house, a portrait of Sally, then one of Jacob. She kept looking over and over them. And the affection she had hitherto felt for Cecilia was now fortified by a most ingenuous admiration. She was astonished at two things: first, how Cecilia could do so well without a master; and, second, she was astonished at her sitting down to attend to her drawing and other lessons without any one telling her that she would need to do it.

Cecilia's natural taste was excellent. Her artistic sense was as good in its exercise, as her heart was in its sphere. Maurice and Charles were proud of their sister. They knew that whether she received the education usually considered necessary for a lady or not, that still she would be an accomplished lady. She had the soul of music in her, if she should never receive a musical education. They were good brothers. And Cecilia was a kind sister. She accepted her lot with the utmost simplicity. She was unfeignedly modest in her successful attempts at self-cultivation. She did not trouble her

brothers with complaints about the want of what was beyond her reach—music, for example. She knew that whenever they could, her brothers would not hesitate for a moment to supply this lack in her education.

Sitting round the hearth of an evening, if any reference was made to the conscription, it was to thank God they had escaped that misery of separation.





CHAPTER XIII.

EVERYBODY loved Cecilia. Young as she was, she was the counsellor and the help of many. The knocker of the outer-door made more noise than Jacob altogether liked. But whenever he saw that it was some one wishing to ask advice or something more substantial from his young mistress, the good negro was always complacent. The something more substantial was very often a little medicine for the sick. And Jacob had given Cecilia her first lessons in simples. It might be a girl calling for medicine for her mother. In every such case, Jacob would stand with open mouth waiting to hear his young mistress's prescriptions. Sometimes he would add his own advice, believing, as a great many negroes do, that he was skilful in the curing of sicknesses and sores. Cecilia used to go and visit the sick at their homes. On these occasions Sally generally went with her. Cecilia's presence was always a comfort. The sound of her healthy voice and the freshness of her looks revived the hearts of the afflicted, and thus lessened their sickness. Dur-

ing some of these visits she had remarked the extraordinary industry of a rope-maker, called John. He seldom lifted his eyes from his work whoever passed. A boy, about ten years of age, turned the wheel; and a little girl was always sitting on a log of wood, an image of the most perfect rest. One day Cecilia solicited the interest of this silent group.

Cecilia. Good morning. You are always at work.

John. Good morning, Miss. We must work if we are to have something to eat every day.

Cecilia. Are these your children?

John. Yes, Miss.

Cecilia. Do you live in the neighbourhood?

John. We live near the rock at Marmoutier.

Cecilia. Are you not afraid to live there?

John. We have to do as we can in this world. Attend to the wheel, Anthony, you are getting too slow.

Cecilia. Is that your son?

John. Yes, Miss. He should be going to school. But I have nobody else to turn the wheel.

Cecilia. And this nice little girl?

John. That is my little Madeline. I love her better than my life.

Cecilia. She is a very good girl.

John. A very good girl. She is deaf and dumb, Miss.

Cecilia. Poor little thing.

John. She is a sweet good child, my little Madeline. I have always to bring her with me for fear of anything

going wrong. She does not seem to care for anybody but me. She seems to be afraid of every other body.'

'I hope she will not be afraid of me,' said Cecilia, sitting down on the log beside the child. Madeline looked at her with some surprise, but did not show any signs of fear.

'See, she loves me,' said Cecilia, with a look of the triumph of unaffected kindness.

'We sometimes meet angels on the earth,' said John, with devout fervour.

Cecilia promised the rope-maker that she would come and see him and his little daughter again. This affecting interview stirred the very depths of Cecilia's generous heart, and set her invention to work in a good many ways to see what could be done for these poor people ; and it did not leave her imagination idle. She thought especially of the poor little motherless deaf-mute.

She thought of many plans which did not seem very feasible, but at length she fell on one that would serve for a little at present.

'Didn't you say, the other day, your ropes were getting done, Sally ? Suppose we buy an entire new set from John,' was the way in which she expressed her first practicable plan. And Sally bought the ropes.

Cecilia often went to see the rope-maker, and always took something nice to Madeline, who would lift up her hands when she saw her coming, and make her father stop work to look at her.



'See, she loves me,' said Cecilia.—Page 82.

One day Cecilia was astonished at not finding John in his place. It was the first time this had ever happened. Anthony and his sister were not there either. Was anything wrong? Shortly afterwards she heard a noise and shouting. She ran forward to see what it was; and Sally seemed to take the same sort of steps as she took when she was twenty years of age.

Half-a-dozen boys were making a noise round a wretched hut. At the sight of Cecilia and her nurse, the young rascals fled. But Sally got hold of two of them, and let their backs feel that there was something solid in her old umbrella. They roared under her treatment.

'Roar, you scamps that you are,' cried Sally in a rage. 'I'll teach you to ill-use an innocent little girl. Are you not ashamed of yourselves? A poor, little helpless thing! You scoundrels and thieves that you are!'

Sally did not let them alone till Cecilia begged her not to thrash them any more. She was glad she had succeeded in delivering the little deaf-mute from her persecutors. For she it was whom the boys were tormenting. They had thrown her down into the mud, and were amusing themselves with her cries.

As soon as Madeline saw who her deliverers were, she held out her hands to them. Sally took her up and caressed her with a mother's tenderness.

'She feels and she sees that I love her,' said Sally to Cecilia, interpreting certain signs the dumb child was making.

They had not stood long when Anthony came running up. The poor lad was crying. His father had gone up to St. Symphorien with some ropes, and left him to take care of Madeline. He had not left her long when these cruel boys began to tease her.

Cecilia said, 'But, Anthony, you ought to love your little sister more, because she is not like other children. And you should take all the better care of her. You should not leave her. We shall not tell your father about it this time ; and you must be a good boy for the future.' Sally and Cecilia took Madeline home to have her washed and set to rights. Cecilia turned out some cast-off stockings and dresses for the child. And when John came back and found his little Madeline with a new dress on and clean whole stockings, he did not need to be told who had done it.

Anthony was always more careful of his sister after this.

Cecilia remarked to Sally, 'We must not lose sight of this interesting little girl. When she is a little older, I daresay we shall find some means of getting her educated.' Sally thought so too.

Ever after this the rope-maker and his two motherless children were very kindly treated by all the inhabitants of St. Radegonde.

'The clothes have made the difference,' was the shrewd remark of Sally one day when this fact was being obtruded on her attention.



'The authority of Sally.—Page 87.



CHAPTER XIV.

CECILIA had noticed that country-people kept their children from school on the slightest possible pretext. Indeed they invented excuses for not sending them regularly to school. She thought it was her duty to look after the education of the children of their own vintagers at all events. And she commenced school at home. It was not easy to manage those stubborn children ; and it is difficult to believe that she would have succeeded, but for the assistance of Sally. Sally was, however, of material assistance in this novel task. She put herself in a position which looked very much like mounting guard over the children ; and they stood in awe of her.

The authority of Sally became all the more necessary as the scholars increased in number. During the winter Cecilia kept her class in the dining-room. Chestnuts roasted in the ashes were given as rewards to those who were good.

When it was fine they sat out on the lawn. But this was exposure to more influences of attraction than

Cecilia's, and influences which were stronger than Sally's authority. These were large blue-bottle flies, butterflies, blades of grass, and golden clouds. And Cecilia had to put on the force of double severity.

Nothing improves the mind, and shows the heart the need of patience, like teaching the young. Cecilia learned a very great deal while she was giving explanations to her pupils. Things she had never rendered herself a reason for before, now rendered a reason for themselves to her. And if patience is the price we have to pay for the privilege of teaching those who need it, obedience is our reward when we succeed.

The quiet harmony of the hearth at St. Radegonde was fluttered. Mrs. Delorme invited Cecilia to an evening party. A number of young people were going to have a dance at her house.

Cecilia's first impulse was true to her youth. It was to be delighted. It was the first affair of the sort she had been asked to. It was quite a new sensation. The only dance she had ever had besides that round at Mrs. Delorme's some time ago, was a dance out in the field with the children of the working people about, when they had been gathered together for a little treat from herself.

But this same invitation soon ceased to be a joyous circumstance. In fact it became the very opposite. It began to plough furrows on the fine features of Cecilia. At length she said out in real earnest,—‘What a fool I am to think of going to this evening party. In the first

place I cannot dance. I leap as donkeys do. And as to spending money on a dress, on slippers, and all the other trifles, it will not do. I shall not think of it. Maurice, you will thank Mrs. Delorme for her kind invitation. But say, I cannot make it convenient to attend.'

'Oh, but you will attend, my little Miss Economy,' said Charles. 'I have been a good sort of boy in the way of saving a little, and it was all for something like this. You know we never know when a rag may be wanted for a sore foot. So no more of your wisdom. Here's the money. You work hard enough. It is very small wages. But just take it in your pretty little hands. You know all the working people give their children something to spend at the fair. So spend you this.'

'Charles,' said Cecilia, 'would it be right? We need money for a great many better purposes.'

'My dear,' said Charles, 'I am not to be done by your moralizing. Go you to Mrs. Delorme's party. There is a good girl. You and Sally can go to town tomorrow, and buy a white dress at Mrs. Pry's.'

'Do you think I should go, Sally?' was an appeal in a tone which left no doubt that the burden of the settlement of this grave question was now thrown on Sally's good old shoulders.

'Go! yes, to be sure,' said Sally. 'I am very glad to think of your going. You are good children.' This was specially addressed to Charles and Cecilia. For Sally admired the conduct and the motives of both.

‘And I will buy the ribbons,’ said Maurice, who felt relieved, for he did not know how he was to apologize to Mrs. Delorme. ‘You can order them blue or pink, whichever you please.’ This remark had more reference to Cecilia’s complexion than to the price of the ribbons.

‘You are both very good,’ said Cecilia to her brothers. ‘And if I am to go, I shall certainly enjoy it. I have often wished to see a regular well-dressed evening party. I want to see what is done in a drawing-room when all are dressed in their best, and doing and saying their best. And, besides, I shall be so proud to be introduced along with my two brothers.’

Charles gave Cecilia thirty shillings. These were his savings. And he felt himself a rich man with them. And so he was, a very rich young man.

On the following day, Sally and Cecilia set out on a momentous journey. It was to the best shop of its kind in Tours. Mrs. Pry was at the top of her profession as a draper and mercer. And Cecilia was going to have an interview with this important personage. Why, she might meet the Mayor’s spouse, or the general’s lady! There was this little peculiarity, however, in the present event, Cecilia would not look so important as these great people in getting what she wanted, and merely getting it noted down in a book, without needing to pay at the time. Our two adventurers had, in addition to something else, the thirty shining shillings which Charles had released from their lurking-place the night before.

They arrived at the illustrious shop. They entered. It was early ; but Mrs. Pry was there to bid them welcome. They were her first to-day, and she hoped they would be her good luck for the day. Mrs. Pry had one or two human weaknesses, you see. To secure this good luck, Swiss muslin, plain and sewed, was hurried down from the shelves. Mrs. Pry undid the parcels, passed her hand under the fabric, and put on her sweetest smile.

‘ This is exactly what will suit you, Miss,’ she said ; and Cecilia was at once of her opinion. But Sally remarked to Cecilia, after inquiring the price of the article before her, ‘ In your mother’s time people wore cotton gauze. It has some body in it.’

‘ It is still worn,’ said the adaptable Mrs. Pry ; ‘ and perhaps it will suit the young lady better than this.’ And the great shopkeeper, having learned from Sally’s remark that she could look after the interest of her young companion, undid a parcel of cotton gauze with the same zeal and smile as she had expended on the Swiss muslin, which was about three times the price of the gauze. Cecilia left it all to Sally, and was radiant while Mrs. Pry measured off the cloth, counting, with a loud advertising sort of voice, the yards as she applied the cloth to a measure marked off on the inside of the counter.

Twelve shillings was the price of eight yards ; and Sally and Cecilia wished Mrs. Pry good-morning.

They next went to Mrs. Jerrat’s to buy a rose-pink

satin belt. This purchase bulked more significant in Cecilia's eyes than the other. The rose is the symbol of spring-time and youth. It charms the eyes and the hearts of young people, and they don't know why.

Their third and last call was on Mr. Palm, the fashionable shoemaker. Cecilia scarcely knew her own foot after it got enshrined in black satin. It was certainly something different to look at from the same foot in heavy shoes bought at St. Symphorien, or in clogs.

Our two adventurers returned home after their grand tour. The dress and the belt and the satin slippers were exhibited to Jacob. He joined his hands in ecstasy, and looking through his eyes straight out from his soul, he said, 'Ah, little missus beautiful as her own heart in dem !'

If a young lady who has been so unfortunate as never to have been under the necessity of thinking about money, experiences a sensation of happiness at the thought that a whole bevy of youthful dress-makers are plying scissors and needles, all night it may be, on one part of her outfit for a ball, I can tell her of happiness as true and as pure. It was the happiness of Cecilia just fingering her scissors before she sent them through this white cotton gauze, which she was going to make into a dress which Sally would fit on, and which would not cost her brothers a penny for the making.



CHAPTER XV.

IT was a settled conviction in Sally's mind that this evening party was a reward to Cecilia for her virtue. For years had the child done a woman's duty ; and now there was a little recompense.

On a bright frosty December morning, Cecilia sat herself down by the window beside her little bundle of shapes which were waiting to be sewed together. She put on her mother's gold thimble. And within her were thoughts neither unsuited to her years nor unworthy of them. She saw herself already in all the grace of her new dress. She saw how perfectly it fitted—thanks to Sally.

The imaginary finish came before the real fitting on. But the solemn moment of fitting on the dress did come. She turned about and about, and back through the same turns again as often as Sally told her. She did not question the correctness of a single remark or suggestion which Sally made. And three days before the time, the new dress was ready. Of course she took

many a look at it in its finished completeness. And her rose-pink belt and her satin slippers were not allowed to lie in the dark and unadmired.

But there was the partial shadow of a possible cloud over the spirit of Cecilia. The sky had that heavy leaden over-cast which threatens a downfall of snow. How ever was she to get down to St. Symphorien if it snowed? As to a carriage, it was simply a thing not to be thought of. Great, then, was the difficulty, for it really would not do for any girl, however unpretending, to ride up to Mr. Delorme's door on the back of a donkey.

Jacob understood his young mistress's fears; and his only attempt to alleviate them consisted of certain grimaces, and twists of particular features and limbs, and of the whole of them all at the same time. His shrugs and the shakes of his woolly head were a little more eccentric than usual. He affected an over-done indifference regarding an event for which he was making most vigorous preparations. More than once it happened about this time that Sally had to call twice on him before he came to do something she wanted. One day she had the greatest difficulty in getting him out of the wine-press. Jacob had a secret which was boiling over to get to Sally. But Sally, contrary to her life-long custom, asked no questions. Each of these two mornings Cecilia had gone to the window first thing to see if it snowed.

The great day at last dawned. Cecilia was up earlier than usual. She did not ask Sally to draw aside the

curtains. She lifted them and uttered a cry of acute pain ; the ground was covered with snow. The branches of the trees, jewelled with minute icicles of hoar-frost or snow, had always hitherto seemed to Cecilia one of nature's most skilful feats of adornment. When she was young, it was the delight of her soul to make snow-balls and ice sweeties with Jacob. But now this snow, so pure and sparkling under the level rays of the first glimpse of the sun, spread a mantle of gloom over Cecilia's untainted spirit.

Sally, Maurice, and Charles felt similarly depressed. What was to be done ? Cecilia could walk with the best of them ; but the new dress, how was it to be got over the snow such a distance, and at the same time kept faultless for the drawing-room ?

While they were discussing this problem of impossible solution, Jacob was sometimes twirling his thumbs and sometimes, for variety, scratching his ear.

'Let's have your ideas on the question, Jacob,' said Maurice.

Jacob's sapient and solemn remark for the occasion was, 'Young massa, me not God to keep de snow from de ground.'

'We don't need to be told that,' said Charles ; 'and if it was all you had to say, you might as well have held your tongue.'

'Me hold my tongue,' said Jacob, in full consciousness of being master of the situation.

'It is strange though, Jacob,' said Sally, 'that you

should let an opportunity slip of showing your invention and skill at helping your mistress out of a very serious difficulty. But I suppose you mean to carry her on your shoulders?'

'Little missus, you no cry. You no have your eyes red at de ball. Me—' A very sudden jerk of his head at an angle right between his breast-bone and his shoulder-blade, finished this sentence. Cecilia and her brothers were disconcerted at breakfast. Sally cut the difficulty short by saying there was no use of looking for noon at eight in the morning. She thought Mrs. Delorme would send for Cecilia. For she would not fail to see what sort of day it was, and she knew the kind of road they had. And if it came to the worst, it would be no difficulty for Jacob to carry in the dress in a basket, and she would go herself and see Cecilia properly dressed at Mrs. Delorme's.

'No, you shall not trudge these disagreeable roads at eight o'clock in a winter's night on my account,' said Cecilia, and she meant it. 'If I do seem a little tumbled when I arrive, they know well enough that we have not a carriage.'

All was silence for a moment. Then the attention of each was pricked up by a strange rumble of a man's footsteps confused with some sound hitherto unheard. Charles went to the door and uttered a cry of joy and surprise.

'No!' he drawled. 'Was its like ever seen? It is unparalleled among the inventions of men!'

Maurice, Cecilia, and Sally rushed to the door, and saw Jacob drawing up a sort of sedan-chair on wheels made out of white pine. No April sun ever cheered the saddened fields so much as this rude machine gladdened the hearts of our family in trouble. There was a perfect explosion of admiration and thanks.

‘Didn’t I tell you Jacob was preparing a surprise?’ said Sally, although none of the overjoyed hearts appealed to remembered her telling any such thing.

‘It is like you, you dear old creature,’ said Cecilia, ‘to come in at the right time, and save my pleasure from being spoiled.’

‘Little missus no go tumbled, no go splashed. She dance light as a feather.’ To secure this had Jacob invented and toiled. The cloud was blown away. This rolling sedan was none of your roomless chairs. Jacob intended his young mistress to arrive as uncrushed as a carriage and pair could have brought her. Now that the secret was out, he could embellish his creation at his leisure. He got some old curtains of flowered chintz from Sally, and spent that day in assiduous ornamentation of the new family carriage, and careful testing of its comfort.

The roads were slippery, and Cecilia was anxious about her brothers, and about Jacob, who would have to pull her.

‘Little missus no trouble herself, me manage de roads,’ was the confident consolation offered by the presiding genius of the day’s success.

‘For once,’ thought Cecilia, ‘I do think Jacob a little presumptuous. Entire roads are not easily managed all in a day.’

She was not quite right. An hour before the time to set out, Jacob took his lantern and strewed both sides of the road with ashes, that Maurice and Charles might step along all the easier, when they acted as an escort to their sister. After a careful scrutiny and survey by Sally, Maurice, and Charles, Cecilia stepped into her carriage. Jacob handed her a bouquet of the rarest flowers of the season. He had grown them in a hot-house of his own planning and building. Sally wrapped her up in a soft satin cloak a little the worse for years and wear, and saw to her being seated without crumpling her dress ; and off they set.





CHAPTER XVI.

HAPPY in herself, and full of trust in those who had the care of her, Cecilia was not to be discomposed by the jolting which could not be helped. The moon seemed to enjoy her situation as holding out a light for their path that night. Cecilia projected her own happy spirit upon all above and around. Never was a princess more conscious of a laudable pride. No ambassadress ever was so exultant in the hour of her social triumph in aid of her husband's political schemes. Nay it would be hard to imagine a queen more complacent in her carriage of golden ornament, drawn by six of her royal husband's proudest steeds, and escorted by a body-guard to be admired at home and dreaded in the field of battle, than was Cecilia Halley that night, while she was borne along inside of Jacob's last invention, with Jacob himself taking care of its movement. Maurice and Charles were her escort. They walked one on each side, while Maurice kept an eye on all that was coming, and Charles hung back to see that nothing went wrong behind.



Maurice and Charles were her escort. — P. 99.

This equipage could not fail to attract the attention of all who saw Cecilia arrive.

‘Look out,’ said one of the footmen to another; ‘this is no prancing, biting brute of a horse at anyrate. Ah! these negroes, they are inventions of the Prince of Darkness.’

Cecilia stepped out of her box fresh and smiling. She entered Mrs. Delorme’s drawing-room between her two brothers, and all eyes were upon her. Mrs. Delorme did not at all expect to see her young friend as she looked when she made her appearance. Indeed she had been the least little bit apprehensive about the invitation she had ventured upon. She had just the shadow of a fear that it might turn out a mistake. She was quite sure, however, that if Cecilia’s feelings were a little put to the test, she would find ways and means to soothe them. She would certainly show her a little special attention.

But the appearance of Cecilia put an end to all this solicitude, and awakened some feelings of another class. Her grace, her bearing, and the faultless taste of her dress attracted the attention of more than Mrs. Delorme.

When a young lady makes her first appearance in society, she is exposed to a good deal of scrutiny. All eyes are upon her. And she is upon all lips. Cecilia was an object of more than ordinary interest already, as the sister of Maurice. But when she entered that drawing-room, she was a centre of attraction on her own

account. Every one present wished to speak to her, or hear her speak.

There was one individual who did not feel herself doing justice to the full force of this attraction. Indeed, she felt not only that she had expected less to attract, but she could not help feeling that there was a little too much of it in this orphan who lived up at St. Radegonde. She did not like to see Cecilia voted queen by acclamation. And this individual was no other than Mrs. Delorme. That excellent lady had a daughter of the same age. And Blanche Delorme was thrown into the shade by Cecilia Halley. She could stand no comparison with her companion.

But let not Mrs. Delorme be harshly judged. She felt the usurping feeling to be wrong. And she said to herself it was wrong. She would not move a finger, nor give a glance to let this feeling cast a shade over the sister of Maurice. No, never. She was a mother, and that explains it all.

Cecilia's friend Amelia had no such internal jarrings. She was proud of the dear companion of her heart. She was just a little ostentatious of her intimacy with the belle. And she did not let slip the opportunity of whispering—'If you only knew how pleased I am to see you looking so nice!'

A friend of Maurice asked Cecilia to be his partner in a quadrille. Cecilia accepted the invitation. It was agreed that Amelia should dance in the same quadrille; and she would see that nothing went wrong.

Cecilia's two brothers knew that she had not had any training for this new exercise. And they felt a new sensation of fear on her account. She had made a good impression to begin with. Maurice and Charles were proud of her, and ambitious on her behalf. They were aware, also, how important this first success was. And they feared it might be dashed by any failure in the dance.

Cecilia had no such trepidations within her. Amelia was a wise counsellor, and a skilful guide ; and under the guardianship of her gracefully communicated hints, Cecilia's first quadrille only added excellency to the impression already formed.

All passed off as heart could wish, and the time to break up came round. Charles wrapped up Cecilia with care in the old satin cloak. He put the hood over her head, and made her draw thick woollen socks on her feet. Sally's directions were punctually attended to.

There was quite a crowd round the door of Cecilia's sedan on wheels. Jacob was standing quite ready, but waiting with the utmost patience the order to start.

The roads were very slippery, and the return journey was accomplished with considerable difficulty. Sally, who had been so overjoyed when she saw Jacob's invention, was now disposed to do him and it less than justice. She kept imagining some accident must have taken place. The good old nurse was sitting in her corner at the fireside alternately knitting and nodding asleep. Midnight came and went, but her children did

not arrive. It was now long after twelve, and twelve was the hour they had promised to be home by.

‘It is true what my father used to say,’ was one of Sally’s remarks, ‘that pleasure parties are anything but pleasant after they are over.’

One o’clock came, and Sally could contain herself no longer. She threw on her cloak and rose to go to the door, when the grating of the large key in the outer door put an end to her agony.

There was a good fire blazing for the travellers. Sally made them tell her all about the party. And, contrary to her usual custom, she did not hurry Cecilia off to bed. She was beaming with gratification. She glanced signs of admiration to the two brothers. Cecilia was at that moment more than ever the darling of her soul. And Sally very nearly asked them to dance that conquering quadrille over again at home, that she, too, might behold it, to praise it in manifold utterance of look, and gesture, and speech.





CHAPTER XVII.

HOWEVER sensible a girl of fifteen years of age may be, society will exert a certain amount of influence over her. The other young ladies at Mrs. Delorme's party had their parents with them. At the end of every dance they could turn to those whose eyes glowed a very different kind of interest upon them from that which Cecilia had awakened. Little words and looks of affection, and a kiss sometimes to cheer or check, were all taken note of by the beautiful and attractive orphan. And it was a sad quiet smile that often played upon her lips, and gave her brows the slightest imaginable contraction. Her brothers were with her to be sure, and they were guardian angels of a kind to be proud of. But her heart would not have been the heart of the good girl of fifteen she was, if it had not felt hungry for a love which it was not theirs to live for her.

Cecilia did not sleep that night, in any solacing sense of the sweet word sleep. Indeed, it was only the incessant questioning of Sally which kept a feeling of

intense misery at bay, before she went to bed. She had, after all, to go through some parts of the quadrille to satisfy the loving curiosity of her good old nurse.

In a day or two, however, Cecilia's spirits had toned down to their former calm. Before a week was over she was doing all her work as cheerfully as ever. She was, in point of fact, doing more than has been yet recorded in this history of her growth within and without. Sally's strength was failing. She was an old woman now, nearly seventy years of age. And Cecilia insisted on performing certain duties of house-keeping which Sally would much rather have kept her pretty hands from being roughened by.

Amelia kept conning over in her own heart all the features of the great success of her friend at Mrs. Delorme's party. 'You will have nothing to do but accept of invitations now,' she said to Cecilia. 'People have found you out; and you will have to come often to Tours, whether you will or no.'

'It would never do for me to accept invitations, Amelia dear, even if they were given. You know I could not refuse to come to Mrs. Delorme's. She has been very kind to us; and I was particularly gratified with the attention her invitation showed. But I am not to be allowed many such enjoyable evenings. You don't know how much I have to do.' This was Cecilia's reply.

'What a girl you are,' replied Amelia. 'Now listen to me, and don't be angry. Papa allows me a good

deal of pocket-money. The dressmaker has enjoyed the most of it up till now ; but I am going to learn to make my own dresses, and—now where are you going ? and what has offended you ?—I was only going to say we should have our dresses and our ribbons alike ; and, of course, the little money I should save from the dressmaker would help—everything helps, you know ; and we should pass for two sisters. Wouldn't it be nice, dear ? Oh ! I should so wish it !'

'Your thinking of all this, and telling me about it so kindly, are worth more than all the dresses and evening parties to me, Amelia,' responded Cecilia, without the least affectation. 'I shall never forget it, I assure you. But to tell you a little more of my feeling in the matter, I felt, oh ! you don't know how sad, that night at the thought of having neither father nor mother to go with me into society. In the very gayest moments of the evening, I kept saying to myself, without wishing to say it, that I was an orphan. Isn't it stupid to have such things in one's head at a dance ?'

'Come now, dear, I don't like to see these little tears trying to laugh in your eyes,' half sobbed Amelia. 'Your father will soon come back to you, and there will be no more need of sad thoughts of any kind. Let me see your drawings.'

Cecilia was just going to gratify her kind-hearted friend's wish, when an old woman came in to ask some advice about her husband, who was ill in bed of a fever. All at once the whole manner of Cecilia was that of the

most tender concern. There was a gravity and good sense in the look which, while Amelia felt she herself had never been like that, she yet had the soundness of heart to admire. Cecilia recommended some medicine, and went to her little surgery to find it, and to explain to the poor woman how she was to use it.

The whole thing looked something gigantic in the way of wisdom in the eyes of Amelia. Cecilia was a great creature now to her apprehensions. From time to time henceforth, conversation between the two friends was serious on both sides. But this did not hinder an occasional romp in the garden, and a very girlish good-bye till to-morrow.

Cecilia made new curtains for the windows, and covered the chairs with fresh chintz. Sally began to think seriously she might possibly be one of the good fairies. At all events, she was certain her child was a great deal richer than some who had forty thousand pounds for their dowry, and paid five hundred pounds for dress when they got married.





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE month of February of this same year was an era to be remembered for rain. The increasing downfall damaged the country to an alarming extent. The Loire rose to a frightful height. An inundation was imminent. Every day Jacob spent a considerable portion of his time in visiting the embankment, and taking note of the encroachments of the river. St. Radegonde was not in any danger from a flood, but the disquiet of its inhabitants was none the less on that account.

Cecilia went along with Maurice to look at the anxious crowds of people. The threatening rush of the waters in their swollen channel was appalling. The little islands which are so pleasant to see in the Loire at its ordinary flow, were covered. Cecilia felt very apprehensive, and came home sad at heart.

The authorities took regular note of the dangers, and warned the inhabitants accordingly. It was an awful night of terror which darkened on the day of Cecilia's sadness. Bonfires, and tar-barrels, and torches flared

everywhere, and begrimed the gloom. Only children unconscious of the danger which threatened their cradles could sleep that night. In the dead of it, cries of despair were heard. The river was bursting its embankment! The embankment must be propped. Workmen with their pick-axes and shovels crowded to the spot. Their wives left their houses and fled with their children in stupefied affright. Three thousand men were at work to keep the monster in his bed, and they worked without rest or relay. Jacob was among them; and no ten men were equal to him in tact and courage. His words were law, and his example fired all his fellow-workmen with ardour like his own.

After eight hours of toil which never can be told, the men were masters of the destroyer. Tours was safe. Their cry and shout of triumph were heard in heaven. When the noise was heard at St. Radegonde, the difficulty was to know what it meant.

Next morning Cecilia and Sally were alarmed to find themselves alone in the house. When they went out to see what had happened, they learnt that they were living on an island. Placed on its eminence, they could see all the appalling sight. Their village was safe, but how many villages had the flood swept before it, and how many of their fellow-creatures had perished! Household furniture and the dead carcasses of drowned cattle and flocks were playthings of the current. The hay and the wheat of the wealthy farmer and the utterly ruined peasant were all in one confusion of destruction.

Brave men were all about in boats, looking for the unfortunate, and rendering help to them when they found them. Prisoners in wave-girt cottages were set free. The air was dense with cries of distress.

Cecilia and Sally felt frozen with terror. They saw in the distance a frail little boat, and though danger seemed to increase its distance, still they could make out that it contained only a young mother with an infant at her breast, and a little boy about five years old in the other end of the boat, whom she had had presence of mind to fasten in his place. The boy's cries, however, were their safety. Every heart felt his appeal; and 'Save them! save them!' was the one self-repeating voice of every soul who saw them. But how to save them? Their frail skiff was the sport of the angry waters. All help seemed to fail.

One man saw them, and despair and his heart had never come in contact. While others were deliberating, he darted through the crowd, and dashed into the flood in all its truculence. It was Jacob. 'He is mad!' was the one cry of every throat. An officer had made an attempt to hold him back, but Jacob flung him from him, and left him staggering. Every eye was now fascinated by the movements of the heroic old negro. He was now under the water, now visible. By the efforts of something superhuman he reached the skiff and the perishing young mother and her infant and the boy. He seized it, and clung to it with his right hand, and swam with his left. His strength was as the

strength of ten. True child of the waters, the waves cowered before him. He would have seemed a merman to the people had they had a moment to be superstitious. The interest now deepened painfully. All in a moment Jacob righted himself, and cried with a voice that all heard ashore, while he pointed towards it, 'A boat! a boat!' He had seen the boat, and he knew if they were willing, safety was possible. It had been lying there unnoticed. Three men at once jumped into it in spite of the prayers and tears of their wives. They made directly for Jacob, and those whose lives were in his hands.

Jacob felt his strength failing. He was not a young man now. It was a long time since he had plunged in a similar manner into the Mississippi, and saved his first master from a danger like this. His coolness and courage were youthful, but years had impaired his vigour. At every risk, however, this young mother and these children must be saved.

The men in the boat drew courage from Jacob. They were worthy of the leading parts assigned to them in this terrible drama. For an hour their struggles were with direful extremities. At last, however, with an effort of unheard of force, Jacob placed the mother and three children in the boat they manned. But Jacob himself? Now be men! Stunned, giddy, exhausted, how was he to be got into the same place of safety? It is done, thank God! and Jacob lies senseless, and to all seeming lifeless, in the bottom of the boat.



A boat! a boat!—Page 112.

The good old negro was now the centre of anxiety and grief. 'Is he dead?' almost shrieked the poor young mother. 'What a man!' 'So good!' 'The saviour of us all.' These were the exclamations of the three men.

The boat came to a landing-place. The mother and her children were at once claimed by all. The shouts of applause, however, were stifled into the silence of sorrow, when Jacob was seen lying prostrate. But they saw that he was not dead. A groan of relief ran through the crowd when he opened his eyes.

Where were Cecilia and Sally in the meantime? Sally had witnessed all that has just been recorded. She had often heard Jacob tell of his exploits in the mighty waters of America. She knew, as no one else did, the exhaustless energy of the man. While she was looking on, Cecilia came up beside her. And Sally at once feigned fatigue to withdraw the eyes that so tenderly loved her good old playfellow, the hero of the hour, from the harrowing sight of his danger. They went together to St. Radegonde. And Sally busied herself and Cecilia with a poor sufferer from the flood. But her thoughts were in torture about Jacob.





CHAPTER XIX.

SALLY and Cecilia were busy, and were, therefore, silent, when a sharp knock at the outer door made them both start. Sally stepped smartly to the door, and saw, with more alarm than surprise, that the vintagers, who had a great respect for Jacob, were carrying him in more dead than alive. The good old negro shivered with cold, and his teeth chattered ; but he gave a forced smile to re-assure Sally. The smile was almost ghastly. Dupain and Bonner came in, and, notwithstanding deprecating signals from Jacob, told all that had happened. Sally knew a good deal of it already. But Cecilia placed herself closer beside her dear old companion, rather than servant, the more she heard of his heroism. They got him conveyed to the spare bedroom. The doctor was called in, and he saw and said there was no ultimate danger. Rest, and the care he was sure to receive from such nurses as he had, would soon set him all right again. Cecilia had now an opportunity of making Jacob some few returns in kind for long years of gener-

ous devotion to her comfort on his part. She would soften his pillow, and make his head comfortable, and bring him a cup of whatever Sally and she thought most pleasant ; for Jacob was not ill to please, and he would never ask for delicacies. She even tried to support him a little sometimes, but he was too heavy for her tender arms. Jacob, however, made believe that she was supporting him, while he used what little strength he had to lighten her load. She would sit beside him and talk so sweetly.

Jacob was in spirit a man of unaffected humility, while he was too able a man to be servile. He could not be treated this way without feeling it a little out of course. He felt himself out of place in this bedroom and bed. He was a servant, and knew it. And it was not for him to be getting the attention due to a master, he thought. And it need not seem strange that the feelings which this consciousness called into prominence, were the principal hinderers of his recovery. They occasioned the most alarming symptoms. It must not be supposed that the springs of life in his vigorous system were affected. In three days after he was brought in so exhausted, he was quite strong enough to hold his own in a dispute with his two nurses.

‘Little missus, me no like in dis bed at all,’ said Jacob.

‘Listen to him!’ said Cecilia ; ‘and pray, good Master Particular, why don’t you like it?’

‘Too fine, too soft, me no comfortable,’ was Jacob’s reply in all seriousness.



She would sit beside him.—Page 116.

'Ah! well, you will stay where you are all the same; you know you must obey,' was spoken by Cecilia, without her taking due account of the depth of Jacob's earnestness.

'O ay, me always obey my little missus,' was said in a half growl.

Cecilia remarked playfully,—'You shall not go throwing yourself into the water to take other people out. And you shall not work so hard in the vineyard, if I can help it. You must begin to live like a gentleman.'

'Like gentleman, miss!' inquired Jacob with every feature of his face, as well as with his tongue.

'Yes, you really must give over working altogether,' was Cecilia's expression of ill-timed kindness.

At these words the fury and indignation of a true African were seen struggling in the old negro's countenance. Cecilia got alarmed and called for Sally, in time to hear Jacob exclaim in great excitement—'Me always work! me no die! me no massa, hear you. Me always work for little missus.'

He had conquered himself before the last word. But the unexpected scene had some unforeseen consequences. Of course it could never have taken place had Jacob been all himself and well. And, in the circumstances, Jacob relapsed into a fever again. The doctor had to be called in once more. He advised that everything tending to excite the old man should be avoided. And especially that they should not contradict any of his whims.

In a few days Jacob was up and about, but still weak. Cecilia used all her art to keep him in the house. Her birds needed a new cage; the flowers in her little conservatory were faded; these two occupations would require his presence in-doors. He would renew them. Sometimes also she took a fancy for some American dish to dinner, which Jacob only could prepare; and, it was plain, he could not prepare it if he went out.

And no wonder she took such care of him. He was the protector of her infancy. The largest portion of the happiness of her life Cecilia owed to Jacob. He had been, and, in some sense, still was both the father and mother whose loss she never ceased to feel.





CHAPTER XX.

THE most terrible time of an overwhelming catastrophe is not the moment of its occurrence. It is afterwards. The inroads of an inundation do not appal so much as its subsidence paralyses. To encounter such a danger does not reveal its magnitude nearly to such an extent as to escape it. Under the gripe of necessity the force of its victims multiplies itself. Pity and a forward disposition to help are then the controlling feelings in the hearts of lookers-on. But the wretch who survives the disaster, finds that the courage of his fellow-sufferers has gone to sleep, and the compassion of others is on the wane.

Eight hours of terrible toil had saved Tours. But the surrounding country was under the water, and the country-people were homeless. They were in want of bread. It was now a testing time for their hearts. Had these hearts been hard in the day of their abundance when others begged at their door? If so, it was now a time of self-reproach. How earnestly Cecilia sought out

those who were in want, can never be adequately recorded by me. The children were the first objects of her care. All the money in the house was turned out, and Jacob resumed duty as market-maker. He went down to the neighbourhood of Tours to buy the necessities of life. He bought, besides good plain food, clogs, stockings, and every needful thing as far as the limited funds at his disposal would allow.

On his return he set at once to make up beds of hay and straw in the wine-press. He thought he had enough for any demands which were likely to be made upon him. But he was not so well supplied as he thought, and many a sigh escaped good Jacob when he saw how quickly his accumulated stores were disappearing.

Cecilia was everywhere. She spoke little and listened much. Those poor people had so much to tell, and they took so long to tell it. Their stories were distressing. The details were heart-rending. Parents drowned, the hoardings of years washed away, flocks and herds swept down by the flood. Cecilia's heart was torn. There was only one word that seemed to her to be needful in the circumstances. It was the word 'Hope.' 'Hope on, my friends, Heaven will help,' was a length to which she sometimes extended her speech. But usually she had little to say.

It was a comely sight to see Cecilia and Sally attending to their guests. Every eye followed Cecilia ; every tongue blessed her. She was to these poor people no less than an angel on the earth.

On the evening of this great day,—a day of great sorrow and of great consolation,—this day which had made many of the poor and outcast so welcome at St. Radegonde, Cecilia, sad and tearful, said to Sally,—

‘Oh ! nurse dear, if we were only so rich as papa and mamma used to be !’

Sally replied, ‘Goodness of heart is riches. And the goodness of your heart, darling, makes us rich to-day. Don’t indulge in vain desires. If the wealth of the Indies were ours, we would not, of course, leave it outside the door. But, to tell you the truth, I do not feel the want of riches at present.’

Many a refugee was made less comfortable that day than those at St. Radegonde, even of those who had gone to entertainers of far more wealth.

Gradually the house emptied of one lot, only to be filled by another. Tears of gratitude and promises never to forget Miss Cecilia, were the parting addresses of the succoured.

Everything had resumed its wonted aspect. Jacob had strength enough to set about seeing all things put into their former order ; and order according to Jacob’s notions was very good order.

The sun shone upon the inundated country, and hope revisited the hearts of men. An east wind helped to dry the saturated soil. The month of May shone in as fine as ancient poets have sung it. Cecilia’s flowers, and meadow, and vineyard looked at her again and smiled.



CHAPTER XXI.

IF Mrs. Delorme had an involuntary secret feeling of jealousy which was unjust to Cecilia, the feeling found no expression in thought, word, or deed. At the very moment of Cecilia's utmost attractiveness in the drawing-room, Mrs. Delorme did her justice, as far as she could render it, against her own involuntary self. She spoke to herself a contradiction of her own injustice.

The truth is, poor Mrs. Delorme had her mother's heart sorely tried by her daughter Blanche.

There are families where wealth and health give all the semblance of happiness, yet the father and mother seem often troubled and anxious. They are frequently to be observed in deep, prolonged, and anxious conversation ; and they seem not seldom in the morning as if they had enjoyed but little sleep. Why should it be so ? Oh ! the old, old story, an ungrateful, unmanageable child. Tenderness in a mother, and authority in a father, are ineffectual over the heart of such a child. Blanche Delorme was one of the sort. She was an only

daughter. She had been as much spoiled as a girl in her unfortunate circumstances could be. From her earliest infancy she was a cross-tempered child, and as she grew older, she became an ill-natured tyrant. Dull, selfish, idle, she paid no attention to anybody. All attempts at giving her the very rudiments of education had been failures. Mr. and Mrs. Delorme were very much respected at St. Symphorien ; but their friends used often to remark their ill-concealed unhappiness. And they used to say,—‘ That torment of a girl of theirs would mar the happiness of any family.’

A few days after the evening party at which Cecilia had been seen to such advantage, there was a terrible ado between Blanche and her mother. After a great deal of anxious conference between the father and mother, Mrs. Delorme said,—‘ Do you know, my dear, I have a singular feeling regarding Cecilia Halley. I think if she and Blanche were thrown together, it would be for Blanche’s good. If Cecilia cannot influence her temper for the better, I know no one else who is likely. And I am sure she would do us a service if she could. We must get her to come and see us often.’

‘ But I don’t expect we shall succeed,’ said Mr. Delorme. ‘ I think of Miss Halley exactly as you do. But the child has so much to do at home. She shows already a capacity for managing a larger house than this is. How she has contrived to carry on her own education along with the menial drudgery of kitchen and other household duties, is more than I can

tell,—at least, it is more than I have ever met with before. Besides, my dear, it would be a pity to let any of our troubles ruffle that peaceful family. These orphans know the secret of happiness. And I am thankful that I have had some little to do in the way of helping them.'

Mrs. Delorme said nothing in reply. But a mother does not easily renounce a plan which seems to be capable of affecting the happiness of an only daughter. She thought her project not so infeasible after all.

Cecilia and her brothers, as in duty bound, paid occasional visits to Mr. and Mrs. Delorme. But Mrs. Delorme had never found it convenient to call at St. Radegonde. Mr. Delorme did look in occasionally, and no more welcome face presented itself to Cecilia.

One fine day Mrs. Delorme was a little in doubt as to what direction she should take for a walk. This difficulty, not altogether dissociated from her own personal pleasure, suggested the question to her—'Why have I been so neglectful in the duties of politeness towards the young Halleys?' Suppose the question to be answered for her. 'Mrs. Delorme was not a lady to put herself much out of the way to use all polite observance towards her inferiors.'

Was there any other lurking motive to give direction to this self-questioning? There was. And it, too, stood in a pretty close relationship to Mrs. Delorme's own interests. 'I would give the half of Blanche's dowry to see her possessed of a tithe of Cecilia's good qualities,' thought the poor rich mother. She was still clinging to her plan.

That day Blanche consented to take a walk with her mother. Whatever took this young lady away from home and lessons was a pleasure to her—even a walk with her mother. Pens and ink were not laid out along the road.

‘We might go and call on Cecilia,’ said the mother.

‘Umph!’ said the daughter.

The most simple dress would have shown the finest taste for such a visit. But it did not show Blanche Delorme’s taste. To prevent an outburst of temper, her mother had to consent to her putting on, for the first time, a new dress of the latest fashion for elegance, altogether irrespective of the threats the clouds were making against all sorts of elegant and inelegant attires.

Mrs. Delorme and Blanche came upon Cecilia quite unexpectedly, and while she was very busy. It was washing-day; and the washing this week was larger than usual, owing, among other things, to Mrs. Delorme’s party.

Our young housekeeper was for a moment put about when she saw Mrs. and Miss Delorme coming in to pay a most unexpected visit. But she at once forgot herself and her toilette, and thought only of the respect that was due to the benefactress of the family. In a garb befitting a washing-tub, she received her visitors as a lady does, as far as manner is concerned.

‘We are in the way, I fear, Cecilia?’ was Mrs. Delorme’s interrogative remark upon entering.



We are in the way, I fear, Cecilia ?—Page 126.

‘It is a very agreeable hindrance,’ said Cecilia ; ‘but washing is one of those things that don’t lessen by being allowed to stand over.’

Cecilia, after a little conversation and good-natured bantering about getting Blanche to help her to wash, asked them to come and have a look over the vineyard. She culled a neat little bouquet of flowers for Blanche, who took it heedlessly, and as a gift of course. Blanche turned covetous when she saw the rabbits and the birds, and all the natural, but very graceful, little adornments of Cecilia’s home. Quite convinced of the right of her superior position in life to ask whatever she took a fancy for, she laid claim to a goldfinch which Jacob had brought up with great care, and had tamed and taught to draw water.

‘I am afraid I cannot give it, as it is a pet of Jacob’s, and I should not like to vex him. Is there no other you would like?’ was Cecilia’s kind refusal.

‘I don’t care for any of the rest,’ sneered Blanche.

Mrs. Delorme blushed for her daughter. Cecilia looked at Blanche not a little surprised.

A blue bind-weed had twisted itself round one of the vine-stocks. Blanche saw it, and made a dart to get hold of it, when her fine dress got entangled with one of the vine-props. She tugged at her dress and at the bind-weed both till she brought down an oil-lamp upon herself from above, and made an awful mess of her elegant new dress.

‘What a pity!’ said Cecilia. ‘You should have

asked me to pull the bell-flower, Blanche. My washer-woman's clothes would not so easily spoil.'

'What about the dress? Plenty more where it came from,' was Blanche's pert response.

'There mayn't always be plenty, my dear,' remarked Mrs. Delorme.

'Nonsense!' retorted her daughter; 'isn't papa just going to buy another estate?'

Notwithstanding Blanche's silliness, Mrs. Delorme enjoyed this first visit to Cecilia; and her parting kiss had a great deal of tenderness in it. Blanche thought it had been a bore. The looks and good-natured remarks of people they passed on the way home, about the oil on her elegant dress, were all laid to the account of Cecilia or whoever put the nasty lamp in such a stupid place.





CHAPTER XXII.

NONE other person had an opinion about this visit. It was Sally. And her opinion was decided as it was one-sided. Small pleasure had the visit of Mrs. Delorme and her daughter afforded Sally.

‘Nothing would serve them but to gratify their own fancy, and come here and turn everything upside down!’ was her remark.

‘Sally!’ was uttered with a tone by Cecilia, which meant astonishment softened by consideration. ‘We must not forget what we owe to Mr. and Mrs. Delorme. Maurice and Charles might never have been in the good situations they now hold, but for Mr. Delorme, at all events.’

‘I don’t forget,’ said the aged nurse. ‘It is because we are so much indebted to them, that I think they ought to show some discretion in the time and manner of their visit.’

‘My gratitude shall increase in proportion as I get

opportunities of serving them. I am afraid Blanche is a trouble to her parents. Perhaps—'

'You are right, dear,' said Sally, responding to a proposition which was never put into words, but the sense of which she comprehended fully. 'You would change stones into bread. At the same time I don't like you giving away your beautiful birds and flowers to that girl.'

'I have plenty more,' was Cecilia's cheery answer.

One day, a short time after this visit, Mr. Delorme was going out, when Blanche should have been going to her lessons. All at once she would go with papa for a walk. This idle young lady's wish had a very vigorous way of getting itself gratified. The master had to go away. Miss Delorme was otherwise engaged.

Mr. Delorme had to go by St. Radegonde. Passing the house, he looked in to say 'Good morning' to Cecilia. Blanche took a fancy to stop with her instead of going further with her father.

Cecilia was sitting at the table with the map of America open before her. It was her lesson in geography that was interesting her deeply.

'If Blanche will not be much in your way I think I shall leave her with you a little, Cecilia,' said Mr. Delorme, who knew very well that Blanche would stay whether he left her or not. 'I am going a little further on business, and it would not be very interesting for her to be with me.'

'I shall be delighted,' said Cecilia, 'we have plenty of time in the country. I can do my reading again. We

shall sit outside, and I will take my work with me. Have you brought your work with you, Blanche ?

Mr. Delorme stepped away to be out of hearing when Blanche said 'No.'

Cecilia took her work-basket out with her, and they sat in a little summer-house that Jacob had erected. Birds and flowers seemed to select this modest shelter. The young housekeeper sent her large scissors through a piece of unbleached calico, to be made into aprons for Sally.

'What fine large scissors,' said Blanche. 'I never get any from mamma but stupid little useless things.'

'When you become housekeeper, you will have large scissors like these,' said Cecilia, humouring her. 'See how sweetly they cut.'

'Yes ! I wonder if I could clip as nicely with them,' said Blanche, making to get hold of the scissors. But Cecilia had no idea of allowing her calico to be either spoiled or wasted.

Blanche had a new impulse all at work before Cecilia was well through with her declinature to part with the scissors. She got hold of Cecilia's work-basket, and turned everything out of it, and it and all upside down. Cecilia took no notice of what she saw clearly enough. She answered quite cheerfully a great many silly questions about many things any child might have known.

'My nurse does all the sewing at home,' was Blanche's first diversion from the basket.

'Our good old nurse has worked well for us in her

day. I am very glad to be able to help her as much as I can,' was the reply.

'You do a great deal of work,' said the spoilt child.

'I find something to do all day,' said the orphan. 'But it does not all come at once. Everything in its time. I was at my geography when you came in. This morning I did some sums. And in the evening I shall go over my French lesson with Maurice,' said Cecilia.

'I escaped my lessons to-day when I came here,' said Blanche.

'Wouldn't you rather have got them over first?' asked her friend.

'Mr. Monk is so tiresome,' was the answer.

'I hear he is a very good teacher, and that all his pupils like him. Besides, they all make good progress.'

Blanche had nothing to say to this last remark of Cecilia's; so she changed the subject, but kept up the strain.

'You are very happy, Cecilia,' was the complaining remark of an utterly ungrateful girl.

'Is it because I cut with large scissors?' said Cecilia, who thoroughly understood the bearings of Blanche's remark.

'No! because you are your own mistress, and have nobody to scold you,' was the senseless reply.

'What *do* you mean?' asked Cecilia.

'I mean you can do what you like,' answered Blanche.

Cecilia laid down her work, and looked straight into the eyes of this unwise girl, and with a feeling of true

compassion, she said,—‘Blanche, you ought to feel very happy. Your father and mother are alive, and care for you. Every day you kiss them, and they kiss you. They think of you only. They live for you only. When I think of the happiness I used to have on my mother’s knee! I sometimes hear the tones of her voice still. When I used to be disobedient, she re-proved me gently and forgave me at once. When I stayed out too long, she would come to seek me, and bring me home. She never was so happy as when I was beside her. You don’t know what it is, Blanche dear, to be without your mother, to be an orphan. I have my brothers, it is true, and they are very dear, good brothers. But, Blanche, never say to any other person what you said to me just now. People would actually think you did not love your parents.’

‘I love papa and mamma, but they contradict me so much, and are always scolding,’ said Blanche a little abashed.

‘Perhaps they have to do it,’ said Cecilia quite seriously. ‘It is the duty of parents to correct their children, and to instruct them. If I had my father and mother, I should try to give them as little to scold about as possible. I think I should be happy in trying to make them happy. And, because I think this, I try to correct my faults as it is.’

Blanche had had enough of this. A good broad hint that she would like something to eat, was taken up by Cecilia, and at once attended to.

‘What nice cake!’ remarked Blanche.

‘I suppose I am a tolerable pastry-cook,’ was said in reply quite frankly.

‘Did you make this cake?’

‘O yes.’

‘I wish I could make a little cake.’

‘If Mr. Monk would give you leave, we shall be baking this day week, and you can come and make a cake with me.

‘We’ll easily manage him.’

Such was the conversation over cake.

Mr. Delorme returned just when Blanche was expressing her confidence in Mr. Monk’s pliability. He noticed more animation in his daughter than he had been accustomed to see in her, even over cake. She told her father, with something like eagerness, that she was coming out to learn to make and bake cakes. Mr. Delorme felt grateful to Cecilia; and when they were going, she asked them to wait a moment. In a minute or so, Jacob came round with a superb bouquet in his hand, and gave it to his young mistress. He did not seem in the best of humours, and went away the moment he handed it to Cecilia.

‘Is this for me?’ asked Blanche.

‘It is for your mother,’ said Cecilia; ‘will you give it to her from me?’

When Sally was alone with Cecilia, she inquired, with evident feelings of anxiety, if she meant to make a companion of that girl.

‘I hope I shall see something of her,’ was the reply.

‘I don’t think it will do any good. In the meantime she turns everything upside down here ; and I know her visits will be a great draw on your patience.’ Such was Sally’s kindly expression of a sense of annoyance.

‘If it would please Mr. and Mrs. Delorme— They are very kind to Maurice,’ said Cecilia half to herself.

‘Maurice does his duty,’ remarked Sally a little pointedly. But she immediately softened, and expressed her acquiescence in all Cecilia’s good intentions towards Blanche.

Cecilia’s influence over Blanche began soon to tell for good. The young lady from St. Symphorien terminated many of her walks at St. Radegonde ; and, as a result, there were fewer squalls at St. Symphorien. Her parents, her teachers, and the servants began to notice the change ; and they all ascribed it to the influence of Miss Halley.





CHAPTER XXIII.



HEAVY gloom was cast over the little colony at St. Radegonde shortly after this. At the same time, it was an opportunity for Mrs. Delorme to convince Cecilia of the claim she felt she had established upon her gratitude ; and Mrs. Delorme gave ample proof of her sense of the debt she owed. Charles fell seriously ill. In fact, the illness turned dangerous in a few days after its first assault. He had perhaps been working too hard. At all events, he had been working hard.

The trouble which this was to all in that happy home, it would be hard to tell.

To the quiet round of their peaceful existence, there succeeded anxiety and care night and day. The order almost monotonous was entirely dispelled.

Sally and Cecilia were the nurses of the sufferer. Jacob went to town for medicines which had no place in his pharmacopœia. Cecilia confined herself to the sick-chamber. In vain did Sally try to allure her from it.

The sister's tenderness developed the skill of the young woman.

If she had not had the experience of Sally, she showed more ingenuity in consoling the sick one. Light and silent she went about in the execution of the doctor's orders, without even suggesting irritation. She made up a bed for herself in the same room with Charles. When she felt it desirable to take a little rest, it was not always necessary that Sally should take her place by the bedside of her brother. Jacob was a watchful attendant; and the least sign that anything was wanted which she could supply better than himself was never allowed to pass unheeded by the good old negro.

For three weeks the young man was on the borderland between life and death. Mrs. Delorme and her husband never let a day pass without visiting St. Radegonde. During these visits they saw more and more of the great worth of Cecilia. There was no duty or attention neglected in that humble abode. And our good friends of St. Symphorien learnt from what they saw, how much of ease and affluence could be made out of only limited means, where the hearts of those who used them were sound and true.

The crisis of the illness came, and Charles took a turn for the better. In a short time he was sitting up in his room, and well wrapped in a warm dressing-gown which Sally had made. Cecilia also had been busy with her fingers, as was to be seen in the beautiful and

comfortable slippers he had on his feet. He could soon take a short walk in the garden. And Mrs. Delorme had the satisfaction in a few days of having the offer of their carriage accepted in his behalf.

Mrs. Delorme and Blanche came out in the carriage to take a drive with Charles and Cecilia. Charles sat beside Mrs. Delorme, and Cecilia and Blanche sat facing them.

‘This is agreeable,’ thought the grateful girl, looking at her brother. ‘A ride like this will do Charles so much good.’

Blanche was sincerely pleased that her mother showed this kindness to Cecilia, whom she now considered her friend. It seemed as if Cecilia was to be the mediator between her and her mother in a yet further sense. Through her mother’s conduct to Cecilia, it seemed as if Blanche would begin to discover what that mother had always tried to be to herself.

Sally was standing at the door when they came back from their ride. Jacob did not altogether like it. At least, he had some feelings which were a little disquieting to his faithful heart. He had known Mr. Halley in the days of his wealth; and the loan of a carriage for his convalescent son to take a ride in, jarred a little with Jacob’s sense of the fitness of things. So he was not there to let down the carriage steps.

Blanche had not quite so much to say as usual. One day, however, she was at St. Radegonde, and when she saw Cecilia preparing her brother’s medicine, she said,—

‘I wish I had a brother, I would take such care of him too !’

‘I have no doubt you would, Blanche, dear. You have a kind heart. But if you have not a brother, you have loving parents, who would be made as happy as any brother by such attentions as you can show.’

This was Cecilia’s reply, and it went a good way towards reaching the heart of Blanche.





CHAPTER XXIV.

THE bad news which Mr. Halley had sent home were far short of the terrible truth. He had represented that the credit of the house of Halley would be sustained with difficulty. The truth was, that the ruin was absolute, and all semblance of a foundation for credit was gone. He had everything to begin again in the matter of making a fortune. And to begin with any chance of succeeding, he saw he would have to make up his mind to banishment from his home and family for long years to come.

It would be of no use to try and gather up words to express the rendings and wrenchings of this good man's heart. The scoundrel he had trusted had finished to the last degree of refinement the work of ruin he had set his heart upon. The fruits of long years of honest, intelligent labour were ravished by the rapacity of an ungrateful villain. These are strong words. Feelings expressed by them do little ultimate good. And Mr. Halley knew that there were other words and works

laid to his lips and lot. There are men whom to beat is not to defeat. There is a life-spring of hope within them, and it gushes forth even if it must dash against all past experience. Such a man was the father of the three orphans who have already made a considerable inroad upon the affections of all of us.

Calcutta was no place for Mr. Halley to begin and reconstruct his shrine ; for wealth is a shrine and a sanctuary. He saw nothing for it but to accept a situation and work at employments utterly distasteful to a gentleman of his former means and present tastes. But he was not a man to withhold the sacrifice all this implied.

At first every attempt was a failure. But to return to France in penury, and leave a fertile soil which he knew had a fortune for him among its stores, if only he could get the means of digging for it, was not to be allowed a moment's consideration.

Mr. Halley was in a state of merciless uncertainty ; but he was not unobserved. There was a Dutchman named Hans Fuyلمان, living in the town in which he had made his last attempt and failure. Fuyلمان took keen note of the industry and intelligence of the Frenchman. He took care not to let him know all the value he saw in him. He was a prudent employer of labour, Hans Fuyلمان.

He spoke to Mr. Halley about his plantations in Java. He was going to live on them, and thought he could find employment for Mr. Halley if he would go with him. It looked to Mr. Halley the very thing he

wanted. He accepted without felt hesitation, but with the amount of reserve which experience teaches prudence to suggest.

Hans Fuyman and Mr. Halley set out on their voyage from India to Java, and after a tedious and dangerous voyage, they reached the Dutch colonial possession.

Java is an island of almost matchless fertility. And it was no fond delusion which took possession of Mr. Halley when he said to himself, 'Here I shall speedily repair my fortune.' This conviction sweetened a little the bitterness of exile. And as to the cruel climate, Mr. Halley would encounter it without complaint.

All the details of these movements were communicated to Mrs. Halley. At least they were written and posted by Mr. Halley. And certainly some of his letters reached home; for there was quite a regular correspondence between him and home for some time. And a letter from his wife in France lightened for some days the heavy load which had been laid to the lot of this husband and father.

Four years trudged along the course of time. The plantations were productive and profitable to an astonishing degree. Hope of being able to return to his country with health and affluence, became more lively every month. But one thing was a sore trouble and a terrible sorrow to Mr. Halley. Letters from Havre became more and more infrequent and irregular, and there never was any explanation of the cause. One long gap

occurred in the correspondence. And after one letter more, not another came.

We know that Mr. Halley was not the only sufferer by this failure in the supply of one of the vital elements of the heart's healthy action. The sorrow which issued from this silence was harrowing. The silence was a great deep, and grief sprung from the fountains of this great deep. Such sorrow, as we already know, proved too much for Mrs. Halley, was all that Mr. Halley's more robust strength could support without sinking.

But why the silence ?

The Dutch planter, Hans Fuyman, had amassed a huge unwieldy fortune. But he was consumed with a miser's burning thirst for gold. He knew nothing of the claims and responses of affection for a family, or for any other object. One thought was his talisman, one desire was his tyrant. The thought and the desire were one talismanic slave-whipper. And Hans Fuyman was the slave. The owner of this slave was a hungry longing to be rich, boundlessly rich.

This slave possessed slaves. His tyrant was impersonal. He, their tyrant, was personal enough. He was the terror of his slaves. The least departure from rule evoked rage. Any loss of time was unmercifully punished.

Hans Fuyman understood his own interests. He understood Mr. Halley in one aspect of the ruined merchant's nature. The scrutinizing miser knew how to turn the intelligence and integrity of the Frenchman

to account. He could be made into an invaluable means of soothing if not satisfying his insatiable thirst for gold. It was necessary to retain him. He must not leave Java to go home, let the device for restraining him be a trick or a crime. And it had to be a detestable crime.

He set spies upon the speech of Mr. Halley. He took possession of the letters he sent and of those which came for him. At every mail from France he opened Mr. Halley's letters. And the perfidious wretch would say, having just hurriedly hid a fond and loving letter from a faithful wife, 'Nothing for you, Mr. Halley. Isn't it strange? I should feel very much annoyed, my dear sir.'

Having begun to keep up Mr. Halley's letters,—a procedure I have called a detestable crime, and it was a crime of which Mrs. Halley's death was only one result,—he had to take good care not to be found out. Mr. Halley's indignation was not a thing to provoke rashly. Accordingly Hans Fuyman had to hire special agencies to watch the post, at the very time that he was hypocritically pretending to send an extraordinary courier to Batavia, to see if there was any explanation to be had about Mr. Halley's letters.

Months and years brought no change, no letters. It is strange that a trick so liable to exposure lasted the trickster so long.

Business multiplied and interest deepened in Java. Mr. Halley said to himself at the beginning of each

year,—‘I shall stay one year more. If I have lost, as it seems I have, all that is worth living for, or worth leaving this and going to France for, I shall at least find them in the grave. I shall go where their names will be mentioned with affectionate regret by faithful friends. And I shall breathe my sorrows in my native air.’ After some such soliloquy as this, hope would cheer up the lonely husband and father. Nay, the possibility of finding his family all right did not desert at least his imagination. There might be some mistake about the letters. If ever he saw them again, Mr. Halley knew it would be never more to be parted from them.

The covetous planter was ill at ease. He knew nothing of nobleness of heart—nothing of love. He kept a miser’s watch over this Frenchman in whom his fortunes were entirely dependant. For without Mr. Halley, Hans Fuyman did not see how the plantations were to be worked to the immense profit they were now producing. He hugged his gold, but to increase Mr. Halley’s pecuniary interest in it, if that would keep him in Java, Fuyman knew was the only way to enlarge his own. Mr. Halley was very kind to the slaves. When Hans Fuyman ordered any to be abandoned, Mr. Halley found means of rendering the order harmless to the helpless victims of his superior’s cruelty.

A poor old negro woman had been toiled into incurable infirmity. She was ordered off the estate by the heartless proprietor. Mr. Halley never allowed her to want. He lessened many a suffering to the victim



Blacker tings dan me!—Page 148.

of a master's greed. One day, under an impulse of gratitude, she said to Mr. Halley,—

‘White man look all around, and you will see some blacker tings dan me !’ Her whole figure, her fingers, her upturned face and eyes were so painfully expressive, that Mr. Halley felt a darkness of secresy all around him. The poor woman seemed alarmed at her own boldness. She would say no more. And Mr. Halley was aware of a mystery which he tried in vain to penetrate.





CHAPTER XXV.

THERE were many circumstances to deepen this sense of mystery. Mr. Halley could not help suspecting one person of playing the spy. But why he should be a spy about trifles, Mr. Halley could not imagine. There was an uncertainty in the conduct of Hans Fuyلمان, too, which he did not understand. He never would press the poor woman any further, as he saw a sort of terror in her looks, but still her eyes in all their alarm kept saying, 'There are blacker things than I am.'

Six months of this disagreeable sense of the insecurity which always lurks in the trail of mystery, passed wearily over Mr. Halley. Hans Fuyلمان turned ill. It was soon discovered that a fever peculiar to the country was careering its fire in his veins. And in a shorter time than usual this fever proclaimed its defiance of all attempts at cure. The news was hailed on the estate as welcome. The slaves of this miser were no servants of his.

Mr. Halley devoted himself to the dying man. He nursed him, and never left his room unless on the most urgent calls of business. He was, however, puzzled with one thing. So long as his speech seemed a little indifferent, the patient was pleased ; but any word of encouragement or sympathy brought on a sort of convulsion.

The end drew near. One evening, the last on earth for Hans Fuyلمان, he requested everybody to leave the room but his partner. Mr. Halley had succeeded so well as to hold this relationship in the business to the Dutchman. Fuyلمان made a sign to him to draw near, and with a scared voice, he said,—‘I am dying and leaving my wealth— The pain I am suffering— Perhaps it will not be so great if I tell you all— Promise you will pardon me.’

Any other man, or Mr. Halley in other circumstances, would have accounted this the raving of delirium brought on by the fever. But Mr. Halley felt the mystery was drawing near to unfold itself. His veins seemed to freeze ; he turned pale, and suffered from a sense of oppression, when he heard the stricken wretch’s words.

With a voice undertoned with mercy he promised the pardon so strangely solicited. And leaning down his ear to the dying man’s mouth he heard,—

‘Open that iron chest— You will find in it—all the letters—from your wife—and children. I have no more. I was afraid—you would leave—me, and I—was

tempted to com—mit this crime. O yes, punish—me if you—wish. But listen—I have not been—all bad. I have taken—care of my—money. I have—a good—deal. Five hundred—thousand rup—pees in that box. Do you keep—your—promise? Do you pa-pa-pa-pardon—me?’

Mr. Halley was struck dumb. A sense of odiousness sealed his lips. The wretched revelation of the mystery set a guard upon his silence.

Incapable of understanding the conduct of a noble heart, the dying miser felt himself threatened with torture, and, making a convulsive effort in the throes of death, he sprang up and gasped out,—‘Par-don—pardon! I am dy-ing!’

Mr. Halley said quietly to the soul in torment,—‘I pardon you in the name of God who is a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless.’

‘Th-th-a-a-anks!’ sobbed out the dying man. And after this he seemed to find some peace.

No man, however reckless in his wickedness, can dare his own conscience.

The Dutchman died and was buried.

Mr. Halley would have kept a part of the property in his own hands; but he felt the atmosphere stifling. What he had made no account of before, he could not stand now. There was a sort of horror around him, now that the mystery had been dispelled. So he sold the whole estate. Many a prayer and tear signalized his departure. He looked to the comfort of the more help-



I pardon you in the name of God.—Page 151.

less ; and did not forget the poor woman who had warned him, and would have told him more if she had dared.

In a month, a long weary month, after the death of Hans Fuyman, the father of Cecilia and Maurice and Charles was on board a steamer, on his voyage home to France and his family.

He knew that his Caroline was dead. But his children ? Did they see their mother laid peacefully in the tomb ? Are they alive ? Where ? Have they been reduced to want and misery ? He would sometimes hope. Maurice and Charles were men now, at least Maurice was. And Cecilia ? She was no longer a child. Was she a sweet girl ? Was she like— ? A convulsive throb of the heart would finish this question.

When they reached Malacca, Mr. Halley and several of the passengers went on shore to visit the church of St. Mary-of-the-Hill, where they saw still remaining a relic of St. Francis Xavier.

They stayed two or three days at Ceylon. There is something quite enchanting about this island. But its charm could not reach the all-engrossed heart of Mr. Hailey.

Their next halt was at Aden, a desert place strongly fortified by the British.

From Aden up the Red Sea, along the coasts of Arabia, our voyager, with his eager heart so far before him, reached Alexandria. For the last time he embarked at Alexandria. In the Mediterranean he felt that its waters reached and washed the shores of France. Notre

Dame de la Garde appeared in the distance. One day he will bring his children to kneel and give thanks in this sanctuary. At present he must to the railway station. The fast train is so slow! He speaks to no one, but to the guard, whom he teases with questions. He reaches Paris. He is in the train for Havre. He has arrived, but he cannot proceed through its streets with speed enough. He knocks at the door of Mr. Dumont. He recognises the servant who opens the door. He is a stranger to the servant; his hair is silvery, his skin is swarthy, and deep furrows have changed the lines of features.

Mr. Halley's name was announced to Mr. Dumont. The old gentlemen rushed to the door, having heard the tones of his voice.

'My children?' said Mr. Halley, before he had time to attend to other civilities.

'They are alive. They have grown delightful children. And they are living in Touraine, near Tours, in a small estate left by Mrs. Lemay to your Caroline, sometime before she died.'

Mr. Halley could not get away to Tours for some hours. His friends crowded to welcome him. The questions asked, and the indignation elicited by the answers, about the one villain who worked his ruin in Calcutta, and the other who kept back his letters in Java, were such as only Frenchmen can present with any degree of fulness to their minds.

Mr. Halley and his history, and the execrable con-

duct of those who had wronged him, were for the time a theme of public excitement in Havre, and thence over France. From Havre he took the train to Tours. And his fellow-travellers tried in vain to open up conversation with this stranger so absorbed in his own thoughts.





CHAPTER XXVI.



T Tours Mr. Halley asked a guide to take him to St. Radegonde. He did not hire a carriage, and his small bill was not at all suggestive to the hotel-keeper of a large fortune.

Mr. Halley felt he wanted to walk that fine September morning. It was not for the sake of the walk either. He needed to breathe the air his children had been breathing. It was either this or some other, or many other motives. At all events, he took a guide at Tours to walk to St. Radegonde.

He followed his guide in silence, and occasionally came to a sudden halt. But the reason for the halt seemed always within himself. Once he said, 'I feel I am going to like this country.'

The guide took the shortest road, according to the instructions of his employer for the time.

A guide, it is to be understood, is not merely a person to walk with you. He knows that part of his

duty is to talk with you. Accordingly the following conversation took place :—

Guide. I see you are a stranger here, sir, and if you wish I will show you round the country a bit.

Mr. Halley. Oh, thank you, my good man, I shall rest at St. Radegonde a little.

Guide. You do seem tired, sir.

Mr. Halley. Are you acquainted up this way ?

Guide. I know St. Radegonde well, sir. I knew Mrs. Lemay very well. Many a message I have been to her house.

Mr. Halley. And the present family ?

Guide. Fine young people, sir. But I have never been up at the house since they came. And, bless you, sir, they have an old nigger, called Jacob, who works like ten men, and knows everything ; and they say he don't get any wages either.

Mr. Halley. Have you ever spoken to the young gentlemen ?

Guide. I have spoken once or twice to Mr. Charles, the younger of the two. He is, you know, in Mr. Rose's employment.

Mr. Halley. And the young lady ?

Guide. Oh no, sir ! It is not for the like of me to speak to the angels. They do say, sir, that she is as good as all the angels in Paradise. But here is the door.

Mr. Halley. I am much obliged. Wait a moment.

While saying this Mr. Halley put a sovereign in the man's hand. The guide said he was sorry that he had

no change. 'I don't want any change,' said Mr. Halley. And the guide thought he must be some English lord.

Mr. Halley seemed to hesitate to knock at the door. A little girl, the child of one of the country-people, came out, and he told her not to shut the door. Still he hesitated.

He looked in and saw an Indian tent which Jacob had erected in front of the house. They had brought it from Calcutta. He stepped in, and there was nobody about just then. He stepped forward, and Cecilia was at a little distance from him watering her flowers. And she seemed only to desist a moment from watering the flowers to listen to the birds that were singing.

It was only nine in the morning, and Cecilia was dressed with faultless neatness. Sally had made her put on a new rose-pink cambric dress this fine September morning. An apron to protect her dress did not interfere with the elegance and grace of Cecilia's figure. Her glossy hair, neatly done up, was hanging all round her neck in girlish curls.

Mr. Halley stood for a short time looking at this vision of loveliness, and said to himself, 'Yes, that is my child.' And yet he felt it difficult to go forward and say, 'I am your father.'

He stepped forward, and at the noise of his footsteps Cecilia looked round.

She bowed modestly and respectfully to the stranger, and the inquiring smile on her lips seemed to express all the feeling she had regarding his visit to her garden.



At the noise of his footsteps Cecilia looked round. — Page 158.

Mr. Halley walked up to her without uttering a word, and Cecilia said,—

‘Father?’

Mr. Halley’s breath was hard to fetch. He nearly fainted.

Cecilia saw it, and gave a slight cry, and immediately Sally and Jacob were by her side, and bowing low to their revered master.

Mr. Halley could not speak. He only clung to and hugged his daughter. Accompanied by Cecilia and Sally, he stepped into the tent, and sat down. Jacob did not come in with them. Mr. Halley looked at his child as she talked with rapture about her brothers. He looked blessings on Sally, as she supplemented Cecilia’s words and emotions.

That Jacob should not have come in did not seem strange to Mr. Halley, who had not been a witness of all his relations to the family for the last nine or ten years. And Sally and Cecilia made no remark on it.

But the reason of his disappearance was soon manifest. Maurice and Charles and Jacob walked into the tent.

The young people did not feel that almost paralyzing effect from their emotions which was more natural to their father’s years. Trial and sorrow had wrought furrows in his soul, which they were unconscious of. Cecilia was radiant. Jacob went hobbling about to prepare a room for his master. Cecilia’s activity, which

the old negro tried in vain to imitate, ran him out of breath. But he would lend a hand where he could.

Mr. Halley watched all Cecilia's movements. He was still doubtful of his own happiness.

When Cecilia came beside her father and brothers, Mr. Halley said,—‘My children, we are united again; but not all.’ They knew what he meant, but could not know all he meant. ‘But, I thank God, none of us are forgetful of her who would have shared our joy,’ continued Mr. Halley, with devout manly reverence.

‘Ah, sir,’ said Sally, ‘she is still ours a little. And Jacob and I can die in peace.’

‘Me no die yet,’ said Jacob, with a true negro’s defiance of the destinies. ‘Me serve good massa more.’

‘Neither will Sally die, Jacob,’ said the true-hearted Cecilia. ‘She will live and share the happiness of us all.’

The first meal this reunited family sat down to was a scene of joy unspeakable. Mr. Halley’s frequent sighs spoke of his joy and his sorrow—joy that they were by him, sorrow that *she* was not.

No one day could nearly exhaust the uppermost thoughts in all their hearts.

Mr. Halley waited till next day before he went to call on the friends who had been kind to his children. He did, however, next day pay his respects to Mr. Delorme and Mr. Rose. Cecilia went with him, and took his

arm. There was a dignity in her mien, and a certain pride in her looks, which by no means lessened the charm of her entire person. Maurice and Charles too walked with a conscious equality to any of their young friends they met.

The news of the unexpected return of Mr. Halley, and that the father of the orphans was alive, and had arrived at their home, spread through Tours. He and they were the subject of all the conversations in general and in particular of that good town. Had he come home a millionaire? Would Cecilia have a dowry equal to her charms? How would Mr. Halley act? Would he continue to live at St. Radegonde? Would he purchase a house, and come and stay at Tours? Would he see society?

These were questions very natural to outsiders both of his home and of his heart. The tradesmen felt their own peculiar interest in his advent.





CHAPTER XXVII.



A BEWILDERMENT of joy cannot last long, and while it does last, it interferes seriously with the general balance of the heart. Cecilia was young. She had not lived long enough to be able to forecast the probable duration of her present state of delight. She had, no doubt, had objects and scope for the outflow of the most ample and purest affection. Her brothers were more to her than brothers often have an opportunity of proving. Besides, they were her protectors. No young lady had ever been followed by greater devotion of servants. And this devotion of dependants may be the means of calling out many of the finer feelings of the noblest natures.

But the tenderness of a father was a novel feeling. We all know it was quite new to Cecilia. She now saw herself the centre of all the thoughts of an able and wise man, whom she had known only for a few days. Her least desire was law to him. Her smile ruled his. The

shadow of a danger to her made him tremble, who had never trembled for himself.

And, then, the feelings of Cecilia's heart were as noticeable. Why were those features of his face withered already? Why those hairs gray, and her father not yet an old man? 'It was for us,' Cecilia thought, 'that he banished himself to suffer so much. Best and most trusty of hearts,' she would say to herself, while looking at her father in silent admiration, 'the love we owe to thee should be as deep and as long as our lives!'

Cecilia saw clearly her father's love. She was quite aware that he admired the least of her actions, and approved of and applauded whatever she said. Her experience had been peculiar. She had not, as other girls have, grown up in an atmosphere charged with uninterrupted approbation and applause. She therefore thought it a weakness on her father's part, but a weakness to be respected.

The season was fine, and the vintage promised to be splendid. Jacob's care and playfulness were on the increase. The garden was trimmed, and the walks raked every day. Baskets of flowers kept up the gaiety of the little drawing-room. The denizens of the aviary shared the smiles of improved fortune which shone on all the inhabitants of the larger dwelling. Fresh seed was freely supplied to them; and Cecilia interceded with Jacob to get the poor goldfinch emancipated from the slavery of drawing water. Our young proprietress turned every

nook of her landed estate to some profit of production ; but the working expenses were not large.

Mr. Halley was wonderfully pleased with Touraine. The pure air, the temperate climate, and all the associations of the place with the happy asylum afforded to his dead wife and lovely family in one part of it, endeared the whole country to him. The sunny and opulent lands where he had twice made his fortune were gloomy and poor compared to the sweet light of heaven which shone on this garden of France, the beautiful Touraine.

Every morning Cecilia and her father took a walk together. All day she might be heard through the house or in the garden calling on her father. The word so new to her seemed to have a charm in it. You would have thought that she made pretexts for pronouncing it.

Maurice and Charles made no change in their situations or habits. Away to their work in the morning, they returned in the evening to share and add to the happiness of home. It was now a paternal roof to them.

But the house at St. Radegonde exhibited very remarkable changes indeed ; and these were very promptly brought about. The days in which Sally would entrust Jacob with five shillings, and inflict on him a lengthy lecture on the great duty of dispensing it economically, were gone by. The lectures were often real inflictions, for really Jacob did not need them. He was a skilful buyer as well as seller.

Jacob used to buy things in St. Symphorien, because he thought they were cheaper in the suburb than in the town. But now the walk to St. Symphorien was not far enough to render it a good constitutional, as well as an enterprise in business. Charged with gold instead of silver, or a cheaper metal still, Jacob marched twice a week to Tours, and made purchases which evoked from the depths of his true heart feelings considerably over towards the reverse side from humility.

The evidences of carnage and slaughter were more traceable in the poultry-yard now than of yore. The white rabbits themselves, I am afraid, did not live for ever. The dinner-sets and many other things needed renewing. The knocker on the outer door, never altogether still, now rattled without ceasing. Every hour packages and parcels arrived. Old Snap used to know most of the visitors. But now he showed that he knew his duty like a dog. He renounced sleep from his eyes and slumber from his eyelids, to be ever ready to announce or alarm the visitors or stragglers at the door, as the case might be.

Mr. Halley was always delighted to see any of the friends who had formerly made his children welcome, when they had less that was outward to render them attractive. Amelia and her father were constant visitors at St. Radegonde. The two young ladies felt an increasing affection for each other. Cecilia's improved fortunes only deepened her love for Amelia, and Amelia could not well love her more than she had

done ; but she had no occasion to love her less for her wealth.

‘Now, wasn’t I right,’ said Amelia one day shortly after this new intercourse began, ‘in always telling you that your papa would come home again ?’

‘Yes ; and all the benefit of your sagacity has fallen to my share, my good, kind Amelia. I am sure I love you all the more for it,’ responded Cecilia.

‘It is always said that wealth spoils wit, and hardens the heart,’ remarked Amelia.

‘I suppose there is a good deal of truth in the saying,’ was the kindred remark of her companion philosopher ; ‘but I really don’t know. I don’t know other people’s hearts. I only know my own ; and I know it is a little tenderer towards my own dear Amelia.’

‘I am quite sure of that,’ was the hearty acknowledgment.

‘I have been telling papa all about how we became friends. But I won’t tell you all the foolish things he said of what a nice girl you were, and how handsome you looked, and a great many other things of that sort, for you know it would make you vain ; and vanity in nice girls is very naughty,’ was Cecilia’s rather coquettish intimation of a series of facts.

‘Oh ! of course,’ was the reply in similar character.

The simplicity kept up at St. Radegonde was the greatest charm about that family, now no longer of limited means. Abundance had displaced the parsimony of Sally’s economy, but superfluous attendance at

dinner was as unknown as it was unnecessary. Cecilia could still rise and change the plates. She could still step into the kitchen to see what was keeping Jacob if a dish was unreasonably long of coming. In Cecilia's country men do more of the cooking than is laid to their lot in merry England. And Jacob's pretensions to skill in cooking were very considerable.

But of all the pleasures of the new state of things,—the full purse, the loaded table, the richer dresses, more to spend on the garden, and pet bipeds with wings or quadrupeds with tails, the more frequent visits of welcome friends, and the walks, and the rides to return visits,—of all these and a great many more pleasures, there was none so pure to Cecilia as to sit and converse with her father. He had so many things to tell. He had seen so many countries, and suffered so many privations, and all for the sake of those he so tenderly loved.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE following is a sample of these conversations between Cecilia and her father :—

Cecilia. What sort of place is Calcutta, papa ?

Mr. Halley. Calcutta is quite an English city. I don't know much about it, therefore, that would interest you. But if I could do anything like justice to the tropical beauties of the country in which it stands, you would think I was telling you a dream of fairyland.

Cecilia. I want you to tell me as much as you can about it or any other place.

Mr. Halley. I was in terribly low spirits when I entered the Straits of Sunda, but sad and all as I was, I could not help a sort of cry of admiration at its grandeur and beauty.

Cecilia. You might do that and think of us too, papa ; might you not ?

Mr. Halley. I admired the country more the longer I was in it. Your atlas is very good. But it gives you no idea of the banks of those straits. In the water you

would see innumerable jelly-fish. Some of them are like a ball of tow. Others are like soap-bubbles. Then the trees have such a variety of beautiful barks. The birds which fly away over the forests of withered bamboos are quite enchanting with their plumage.

Cecilia. It must be so delightful !

Mr. Halley. Look here in the map. See here is Prince's Island. Look along the coast of Sumatra here, and you see the volcanic island Krohatoa. It rises up in a sugar-loaf shape, and a sort of triangular cloud seems to hang over it. The appearance of countries not marked in the map at all is really magnificent. Wherever a blade of grass, a flower, or a tree could be supposed to grow, you are sure to find it growing. Cocoa-nut trees, bananas, and bamboos seem to have selected waters to solace their roots. Nothing can equal this great basin of water called the Straits of Sunda.

Cecilia. St. Radegonde will look wretched in the comparison ; doesn't it, papa ?

Mr. Halley. St. Radegonde is more charming to me, darling, but for different reasons.

Cecilia. I should have liked so much to visit those countries with you. You would not have been so sad then, papa, would you ?

Mr. Halley. The climate would have been trying to you, dear. Java is a very fertile island ; but few Europeans can stand its climate. Besides, the hurricanes and the earthquakes are alarming and very frequent.

Cecilia. And the wild beasts ?

Mr. Halley. Wild beasts are quite common. There are tigers, jackals, the rhinoceros, boa constrictors, crocodiles, and a great many smaller ones no less dangerous.

Cecilia. I wonder anybody could live in such a country !

Mr. Halley. The Dutch have introduced and naturalized a number of domestic animals from Europe, such as cows and horses.

Cecilia. I shouldn't like to go to Java. What kind of beds do they sleep on, papa ?

Mr. Halley. The beds ! you would laugh if you saw the beds. Inside a mosquito-net, a single miserable mattress, as hard as the cushion in a railway carriage, is our couch for soft repose. You look out, and see on the opposite wall huge grim lizards with enormous heads, and eyes standing out of them, and a leaf-like queue hanging back from their heads.

Cecilia. Oh ! I should shout for Jacob.

Mr. Halley. Poor Jacob would be of no use, there are so many of them. On the floor, in all the corners, there they are. And you have to go to sleep with a full knowledge of the society you are in ; and quite certain that they will attack you vigorously when you are asleep.

Cecilia. What ever takes people to such countries ?

Mr. Halley. The desire to see other men and strange manners is a great attraction.

Cecilia. And to make money too, papa.

Mr. Halley. Most men wish to make a fortune. All the more if they have families.

Cecilia. When Charles, my teacher in geography, showed me the island of Java, I little thought you were there. What sort of people are the Malays? Aren't they very ugly?

Mr. Halley. No; not all of them. There are some fine things about them. There is a sort of valour in the way they walk. Their oval face, and dark brilliant almond eyes come to be very pleasing. They have a fine straight nose. Their mouth is large, but it is shaded with a small moustache as sleek as silk and as black as coal. Their forehead is high and broad, and their hair silky and glossy.

Cecilia. How do they dress?

Mr. Halley. They wear a turban, a sort of vest with a collar on it, and a skirt, striped or fancifully ornamented.

Cecilia. Jacob says the best fruits in the world are in India.

Mr. Halley. The fruits are wonderfully delicious. The nanka, a sort of pine-apple, has the taste of cream cheese. The bananas and the mangos, with their purple skin, red juice, and white pulp, are splendid fruits. They taste finer than our grapes. Indeed their freshness and sweetness are not surpassed by any fruit in the world.



Your cane is a bamboo?—Page 174.

Cecilia. There are wonderful forests and prairies, aren't there, papa, in the island of Java?

Mr. Halley. Yes; I have made my way through some of them. We sometimes come on sheets of water of the most heavenly blue, along the edges of which you will see the largest birds walking gracefully, and occasionally contemplating themselves in the water.

Cecilia. I should like to have seen that.

Mr. Halley. It is time Maurice and Charles were coming home. Shall we go and meet them?

Cecilia. Oh yes, papa. Your cane is a bamboo, isn't it?

Mr. Halley. They use the bamboo in the building of houses in the East. And it is capital for making partition walls.

Cecilia. But the terrible hurricanes you spoke of will easily blow it down?

Mr. Halley. Although it is light, it is compact. Bamboo houses can withstand not only the hurricanes, but the earthquakes. And then they cost almost nothing. Another strange thing is, there is no better defence against the attacks of tigers.

Cecilia. How?

Mr. Halley. These animals have a dread of the bamboo. Its varnishy surface irritates their teeth and claws. Accordingly, the best cage for tigers is a bamboo cage. The rice plantations are surrounded with bamboo palings to keep out destructive animals. The natives

make out of this same wood vessels for carrying rice, chairs of the most elegant shape, musical instruments, and lots of other things.

Cecilia used to benefit very much by these conversations. They were very lively lessons in geography. And she used to imprint them on her own memory by repeating them to Amelia and Blanche.





CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. HALLEY soon began to feel and to say, that he would scarcely be doing all his duty to his family, if he continued to live in the peaceful quiet of St. Radegonde. The head of a family, he thought, had duties to discharge towards his children in relation to society. He began to feel that he ought to place his children in a position proportionate to his fortune. And that in the winter, at all events, he ought to go and live in town.

It was accordingly arranged that they should consider St. Radegonde rather as a summer residence than as a constant home. Cecilia was a little taken aback, not to say annoyed, when this arrangement first began to be talked about. St. Radegonde was a home of many dear associations to her. Besides, she had created duties for herself among the poor people around. And to go and live in town seemed like leaving them with no one to care for them.

Mr. Halley understood and admired his daughter's difficulties, and set himself to convince her that she

could still be of as effective help to them even if she was not so much personally among them. Cecilia was satisfied. And when she came to take the same view as her father, there was no difficulty in overcoming any scruples the rest of the inmates at St. Radegonde might have.

The vintage was excellent this year. And Cecilia was very much pleased when her father admitted that some of their Touraine grapes were as good as the Indian mangos.

The time came round when the dear old house had to be shut up. Cecilia visited all her pensioners, and others whom she had had the pleasure of helping. Mr. Halley rented a fine house in Royal Street. The family went to it, and took up their abode in Tours with as little show as was possible in the circumstances. Cecilia had the main say in the furnishing of the new house. She had not had any experience in this sort of thing; but she had an excellent taste by nature. Jacob and she kept a good look out after a due supply of flowers and birds. And having procured them to their fancy, they lessened and lightened the regrets at leaving St. Radegonde.

New acquaintances had to be formed. The days could not now be spent in the same almost monotonous perfection of order. But such order as was suitable to their new circumstances was in no danger of being missed by any want of activity on the part of Cecilia.

New pleasures sprang into being. Mr Halley set up

a carriage. In addition to the carriage horses, there was Cecilia's own horse. And she soon became a skilful rider.

Before going back to settle down at St. Radegonde, Mr. Halley wished to take a run through Touraine. About the beginning of spring, he and his daughter and two sons set out for Amboise. They visited also Chambord and Chenonceau. All the places of any note in Touraine were visited, and their charm was felt by this intelligent family.

But none of them made Cecilia forget St. Radegonde. She returned to it with more desire towards it than ever.

Sally could now do little, but her word was nearly as much law as it ever had been. Her advice was always asked, listened to, and valued. Cecilia's tenderness for her aged nurse seemed to increase in proportion as years rendered her more independent of her care.

Jacob showed no disposition to spare his master's fortune as far as he could get command of it. He indulged in a great many fancies of good gardenership. Nothing seemed to him too fine or too expensive for St. Radegonde.

At the end of November, Mr. Halley told Cecilia he was going to take her to Paris.

'Not without Maurice and Charles?' said Cecilia. 'That would never do. I should need their eyes to look and see with. You know, papa, we have never once been separated. And I don't know what would

become of them if their little sister were to run away to Paris and leave them.'

Her father was not difficult to bring to see the matter as she wished him. Maurice and Charles both easily obtained leave to visit Paris with their father and sister. It was their father's firm intention to train them strictly each to his respective business; but he had himself been an employer of young people, and he knew that a holiday well spent always did them good. Besides, he and his sons could well afford a little relaxation.

They set out at the end of January. Sally and Jacob were left in Tours. This separation was not at all to the mind of either of these faithful servants. Sally remarked to herself,—'They are going away, and the almonds will flower in a very short time. I wonder what I shall do with myself in this barracks of a house. I shall go out and take a walk along the Mall, and I shall think of them. Ah me! The ups and downs of this strange life!'

Jacob took advantage of the liberty their absence afforded him to make frequent visits to St. Radegonde, where he always found plenty to do in the way of keeping himself in useful and profitable exercise.





CHAPTER XXX.

RETIREMENT, and the rest which only retirement guarantees, would have been much more to the taste of Mr. Halley than the bustle of society in Paris. It was a willing sacrifice, but none the less a real sacrifice to Mr. Halley, to leave first of all St. Radegonde for Tours, and second, and more trying, to leave Tours for Paris.

Cecilia was a young lady in every reasonable sense of the term. Her brothers had given her the enduring elements of a substantial education. Sally and Jacob had been teachers to her which no fees could procure. Her school was at home. Such had been Cecilia's teachers and school.

Mr. Halley did them all more than ample justice in his recognition of their merits. But, whether for good or for evil he was not a man to question much, it was inevitable that his daughter should live in society. And, fond father as he was, he was not blind to the fact that his daughter was lacking in many of the

qualifications necessary to make her feel at ease in society. Even the charm of her natural grace would not supply her many defects. There are shades of conduct which no force of intellect, however alert it be, can discern and assume without special training. They are shades, and may be called shadows. Too much attention to them may justly be styled substituting the shadow for the substance. Be it so styled. But there they are ; and in addition to the fact that practical sensible people do not as a rule make frantic efforts to re-set the fixed stars, there is this also to be remembered : they are as necessary to society, and as certain a consequence of social refinement, as a shadow is to any substance under the beneficent light of the sun. This was Mr. Halley's view. He neither stifled the throbs of his own individual heart, nor did he wish his children to stifle theirs, in response to social exactions. He knew that there was a social glare which withered the individual soul. He knew also that the best way to protect his daughter from this baneful influence, was to supply her with those accomplishments which would put her so much at her ease, that she would possess entire self-control under its brilliancy, whether it glared or was glorious.

‘If I can find our old friend Mrs. Nelsy,’ said Mr. Halley to himself, ‘she would come as near to being the teacher and protector I wish for my daughter, for a short time, as any I am likely to meet.’

When Cecilia walked along the streets of Paris leaning on her father's arm, the people who passed turned

round to look after her. The freshness and beauty of her complexion were proof that she was a stranger in Paris. And what was striking in this case, as in all busy cities, was, that the men who seemed most hurried, and whose looks indicated the greatest pressure of business, were those who most frequently made an involuntary but almost imperceptible halt to look after her.

Cecilia was delighted to see how completely charmed her brothers were with all the new sights of Paris. Mr. Halley came to a stand before the shop windows as faithfully as if he had been her mother.

Mr. Halley was disappointed when he called and found that Mrs. Nelsy was not at home. Her house was still the same, however, as when Mrs. Halley and he used to visit her.

As soon as Mrs. Nelsy came home from the country, Mr. Halley called again; and the surprise at seeing her old friend gave place to confidence and gladness at hearing of all the adventures he had encountered, and the advantages he had gained in Java, and other countries of the far East. Cecilia was the subject of long and earnest conversation.

'She is so like her mother,' Mr. Halley continued. 'I should not like to entrust the charms she is endowed with to the milliners and merchants of good breeding. I know where she is awaiting, and I wish you to supply the wants.'

'If my gray hairs will not chill her confidence and affection, I shall do my best,' said Mrs. Nelsy.

Mrs. Nelsy was sixty years of age, and looked it. She had always enjoyed excellent health, and she brought some of her youth into her years with her. She still consecrated several hours a day to music and painting,—arts which, all her life, had exercised a charm and even a fascination over her. She was a highly educated lady, and as far removed as could well be imagined from any hue of what is called a blue-stocking. Every demand of enlightened charity felt a kindly response both in the heart and from the hand of Mrs. Nelsy. She did not now go much into society ; but she had long won her right to visits from those who did not scrupulously exact from her visits in return. Even the young and the gay liked to spend an hour or two in Mrs. Nelsy's drawing-room. When a mother would say to her fashionable daughters, 'We are to go on such-and-such an evening to Mrs. Nelsy's,' it was always hailed with joy.

Mr. Halley felt quite relieved that his daughter was to have her social nature cultivated by so excellent and so able and so amiable a guardian.

He had appointed with Mrs. Nelsy an hour at which he would bring Cecilia. The time was drawing near, and our young lady from the country put on her finest dress, which was not a new one, brushed her little felt hat, and set out with her father, leaning on his arm, a fashion of which she would not think that it could become obsolete. And yet it was discontinued at the time, because of the inconvenience caused by the expansive dress of

the ladies. Every new invention to lessen the labour of man calls new industries into play to supply scope for his labour. So every new fashion exerts an influence over every elder member of the family of the fashions. Thus crinoline unlinked the lovers' arms. Whether this link is of elastic nature, and will rebound into its catch again, I do not stay to discuss. There was nothing in dress to unlink Cecilia's arm from that of her long-lost and lately found parent.

There was a lady with her daughters in when Cecilia and her father arrived. The daughters were dressed in the height of fashion, and our rustic beauty felt a little abashed. Mrs. Nelsy's tender welcome, however, soon set her at ease. The young ladies eyed Cecilia from head to foot, and did not fail to detect the charm of her natural grace. And when they heard that Mr. Halley had just returned from India, they tried to substitute graciousness for grace. For India and gold were synonymous terms in their vocabulary.

'Your mother and I were very dear friends,' said Mrs. Nelsy to Cecilia after they left. 'And I feel as if Caroline's daughter ought to become my own child.'

'I hope she will, my dear old friend,' said Mr. Halley.

Mrs. Nelsy was not offended at being called old. It was a fact. And even the tone of youthfulness discernible in her dress was no attempt to conceal the fact.

'We shall go to-day to my dressmaker, and—'

Mrs. Nelsy was interrupted here by Cecilia breaking in eagerly with—

‘I make my own dresses, ma’am.’

‘I congratulate you on that rare accomplishment. I am thankful to say that I too can make my own dresses. But for this time we had better leave it to those who have nothing else to do. Our time can be more profitably employed.’

A mutual smile between protectress and ward ratified this proposal.





CHAPTER XXXI.

THE more a father in Mr. Halley's circumstances loves his daughter, the more sensibly he feels that she has claims upon him which can only be fulfilled by substitute. Mrs. Nelsy was a substitute in whom Mr. Halley had the faith of a child. He therefore handed over to her for the time all his rights over this child of his. Mrs. Nelsy set about her duties without delay, and with that entire absence of hesitation, which showed that she knew her duty and how to do it. And first she and Cecilia got into a carriage, and set out a-shopping in a much larger way than the economical young lady had ever assisted in before. The last great occasion of the sort was with Sally at Mrs. Pry's in Tours. Now it was in Paris, and it was something formidable, nay, almost dreadful, to Cecilia.

When the young man spread out rich silks of every most expensive shade, Cecilia's feelings were more of the class that busy themselves about right and wrong



Cecilia liked them all.—Page 188.

than of those which the richest and rarest robes evoke. Mrs. Nelsy asked Cecilia which she liked best, and Cecilia liked them all. They were all so fine.

Mrs. Nelsy seeing that she had really no choice, purchased according to her own taste two dresses ; one of blue taffetas, and the other of white tulle. Mrs. Nelsy had already issued cards for a grand party in honour of Cecilia and her father.

When they went to the dressmaker's, Cecilia opened her eyes wider than ever. That great person proposed trimmings of lace and ornament of the most frightful expense, without seeming to feel it anything out of her usual way. Cecilia thought it should be in the way of no person in all her senses.

Mrs. Nelsy, too, astonished Cecilia ; for she did not seem to stand the least in awe of the great oracle in shapes and trimmings. She let the torrent of expensive speech flow on for a while, and then gave her own orders.

The scene at the milliner's was equally trying. All the bonnets, white and pink, seemed to Cecilia equally fine. But the milliner went into the most minute discussion of details ; the whole question turning on what would be superb enough to match with Cecilia's beautiful hair, the hue and shade of which surpassed, according to the milliner's own confession, anything she had ever beheld.

The people at St. Radegonde, and Mrs. Pry and Mrs. Jerrat at Tours, had never discovered the celestial

beauty of Cecilia's hair ; at least, they had never made any remarks about it.

When Mrs. Nelsy and she got into the carriage again, the young lady looked a little demure. Mrs. Nelsy began to try and excite her attention by pointing to the fine shops they were passing, but she said, quite heedless of external grandeur,—

‘Was all that true which the milliner said about my hair? Nobody ever mentioned it to me before.’

Mrs. Nelsy saw and was proud of the directness and simplicity of character which this question and remark held up to her gaze ; and she answered,—

‘No, dear ; you have been living among people who loved you, and would have loved you all the same even if your complexion and hair had been less noticeable than in truth they are. This woman makes the greater part of a very considerable sum of money by such speeches ; and she makes them to nearly all alike. The vanity of women is the vein of wealth she works.’

Cecilia thought the milliner must be a very wicked person.

‘Well, it certainly is not good, but it is difficult to call it wicked,’ said Mrs. Nelsy. ‘It is a sort of false coin which they use for the stimulating of trade ; and all who deal in it know what it is worth. Cling you to your own love of truth and all that is truthful, my dear ; and if you do this, I shall not fail to tell you of your faults and defects.’

But here again Cecilia was very considerably puzzled.

She had not heard before of her exceptional beauty, it is true ; and no more had she heard of faults and defects. Neither Maurice, nor Charles, nor Sally, nor Jacob had ever spoken of such things to her. Her father had all authority over her, and he had not so much as hinted faults or defects.

It is quite apparent that Cecilia had a good many things to learn.

A few days after, Cecilia's blue dress and white bonnet came home. They were in the perfection of taste, and fitted her as heart could wish.

Mrs. Nelsy noticed, when she made a sort of good-humoured attempt at a lady's graceful bow at entering, that the bow, or bend, or courtesy, was rather rustic in its angles. Mrs. Nelsy began to instruct her in this all-important matter of making a suitably genteel courtesy or bow at entering. Cecilia thought her excellent guardian was in fun. But no such thing. Mrs. Nelsy was quite in earnest. She had begun to show Cecilia her defects ; and she convinced her of this one ; and she cured her of it too before the night of the party came round.

Maurice and Charles also began to dress so as to suit the atmosphere of fashion they were in. This was greatly to Cecilia's delight. They were dear brothers to her ; and whatever improved their appearance gladdened her heart. Indeed, Cecilia felt many degrees more of interest in their dress than in her own.

Mr. Halley bought each of his children a beautiful

gold watch and chain. Every day, for a while after they were bought, Cecilia had to compare the movements of the three. They kept time admirably. 'Like ourselves,' said Cecilia.

The time came round for Maurice and Charles to leave Paris and all the gaiety of the modest fashions they had seen or sought. They spent an evening with Mrs. Nelsy and a few of her very select friends. They saw Cecilia in all the splendour of her new dress and a garland of roses; and next day were to have left Paris for Tours. But Mrs. Nelsy begged Mr. Halley, as a special favour to herself, to allow them to stay over the great party at which Cecilia was to make her grand appearance.

Cecilia remarked to herself how different Mrs. Nelsy's parties were from Mrs. Delorme's. They were far grander, but somehow or other they were not so much of a special effort. Still she looked forward to one of Mrs. Nelsy's evenings at home with a considerable degree of awe.

Cecilia discovered a good many points of difference between provincial and Parisian habits of good society. It seemed to her that elegance and heartiness were not very compatible. That heartiness was a good thing, Cecilia's whole nature asserted and testified. That elegance was an accomplishment to be striven after, if early opportunities had not been altogether favourable to it, she felt no disposition in Paris, and in Mrs. Nelsy's house, to deny. There was more heartiness in

Tours, or, to speak more accurately, at Mrs. Delorme's parties. And the elegance at Mrs. Nelsy's seemed all the more dazzling that heartiness was hidden. She did not for a moment suppose that it was awanting. She did not say to herself even that it was deadened. 'It is hidden,' was the hardest expression which Cecilia used regarding it, even to herself.

There was a great deal more of the same kind of thing as the lesson in courtesying already noticed. Mrs. Nelsy knew that these were matters merely of education. And knowing society as she did, she was anxious to conceal as many of the defects in Cecilia's education as she could manage without making her uneasy.





CHAPTER XXXII.

CECILIA was still staying with her father and brothers at the Windsor Hotel. But Mrs. Nelsy had selected for her an attendant in the person of Sophia, an experienced chamber-maid or lady's-maid, or whatever a maid of all Cecilia's work would be properly called by the learned in such matters.

Sophia, it must be admitted, had a difficult task to perform. She had to come in as successor to Sally. And Sally's place in relation to Cecilia Halley was one of those niches in nature which would admit of only Sally. No doubt Sophia was a young woman, and her mouth was prim and her nose was proper, according to Grecian propriety. And Sally's mouth was large, and her nose was small and slightly inclining to the pug peculiarity ; and she was quite an old woman. Sophia would not have thought much of Sally for a place like her own. And Sophia was a very smart maiden. But to Cecilia she was not, and never could be made into, Sally.

There would be no good end served by concealing the fact that Cecilia began to relish the attentions that were shown her by everybody she was brought in contact with. Nor was Sophia's great adulation altogether without its pleasant flavour. I shall here admit at once, that the slightest possible sense and show of vanity are an element in the entire composition of Cecilia Halley, as she appears just at present in this narrative.

The flowers of St. Radegonde had a sweeter perfume than any Paris could ever adorn its devotees with. But the bouquet which Maurice put into his sister's hand on the evening of the great party, was something to look at which she had never beheld with these two eyes of hers before. The evening had come round.

Cecilia's heart fluttered considerably. Mrs. Nelsy would be, no doubt, all kindness and confidence. Her brothers would pay every attention to her. But to enter that brilliantly lighted room—to give the graceful bow Mrs. Nelsy would look for—to meet all those strangers, salute them and respond to their salutation—these were trials which took from the sweetness of Cecilia's lot.

At length the carriage was waiting with its steps down. Now they were at the door of Mrs. Nelsy's drawing-room. Then Cecilia entered, leaning on her father's arm, and she felt all eyes were upon her, and got seated like other people, after a good deal of introduction to mothers and their daughters, and to one or two other ladies who were not described as anybody's mothers or daughters.

There was the proper amount of dancing at the proper time. Cecilia danced, and did it nicely. And her brothers were proud of her and the praises of which she was the object.

Cecilia took very much to one young lady, Miss Louisa Farel. She and Louisa chatted and laughed, and amused themselves very much as young ladies do when they are not at a large party. The pleasure of dancing was quite secondary in Cecilia's estimation to the pleasure of this easy intercourse on a sofa with Louisa, sitting a little in the shade. New arrivals, their dresses, and their looks and remarks were immensely amusing.

Just then a young man of rather mean appearance, puny and plain, came into the room.

'Oh ! who is that monkey ?' asked Cecilia, all confidence in Louisa.

'It is my brother,' answered Louisa, in a trusting whisper.

Cecilia was eating an ice at that moment, but she ceased to be aware of the fact. A spell had been thrown over her. Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt was no more capable of looking round than Cecilia was just then. But she was no pillar of any inanimate matter, however transfixed she might be by her own sense of guilt.

Yes ! guilt. A blush, which only her fresh complexion, the beautiful handiwork of nature's rural art, could assume, betrayed her terrible consciousness. Maurice

did not know, and could not guess, what had happened ; but he saw there was something sorely embarrassing his sister. He offered her his arm to change her seat, or to go out of the room. No ! she was only a little tired. He ought to ask Louisa to dance. He did ask her. And Louisa consented with all the cordiality in the world. She said to Cecilia,—

‘Don’t be so afraid of dancing. Join us in this quadrille.’

This invitation enabled Cecilia to recover herself. It was given with the most perfect charm of simplicity. And Cecilia scanned the countenance of Louisa with a keenness almost agonizing. But all in vain. No shadow of resentment could be traced. And yet Cecilia held her bound in duty to her brother to feel deep resentment. The sweetest of smiles played all the time over all Louisa’s features ; and it was there for the rest of the evening.

The hour of parting arrived. Cecilia, after getting to the hotel, and to her own room, was undressed by Sophia. When Sophia left her, she fell on her knees, and poured forth a torrent of tears. That rash word lay on her soul. It was a load of sorrow she could not disburden herself of. How dared she utter it ! It was unjust. When James Farel spoke to his sister during the course of the evening, he spoke with an accent of tender brotherly love.

Cecilia could not sleep for a long time. And sleep was no relief. Asleep or awake, that rueful word

'monkey' kept ringing in her conscience. What pain she must have given to that sister! And it was no ordinary offence, thought Cecilia. 'Louisa loves her brother as I love my brothers,' she said to herself. 'Monkey that I was! Shall I ever forgive my own wickedness and folly?'

There were other considerations. Would Mrs. Nelsy forgive her when she heard of it, as no doubt she would? 'Oh, I wish,' again broke out Cecilia, 'I could go home with Maurice and Charles! But then I should have to tell my father what I said. It would dispel all his illusions about my goodness, and it would be such a distress to him. I hate this world. I shall never go into society again.'

Conscience had a word to say, however, in reply to this confession of hate and firm resolve. 'Why accuse the world? Why renounce society? Had she not been made as welcome as kind hearts could accomplish? Was she not the object of the warmest sympathies? Did Louisa resent her cruelty?' These were a few of the indignant questions of conscience.

Next day Maurice and Charles bade the tenderest adieus to their sister. She promised to keep them fully informed of all her movements.

When they were gone, Cecilia said to herself, 'My days of pleasure are ended.'

Nevertheless the tempest in her soul was calmed by a resolution she now formed.

At breakfast she spoke with her father about the

party the night before, and asked his leave to make a call by herself on Mrs. Nelsy.

Mr. Halley was always only too happy to think of his darling being exposed to such influence as Mrs. Nelsy exerted. He consented cheerfully, and assured her, she and Mrs. Nelsy had nothing to fear in the way of intrusion from him.

Cecilia was now at peace with herself. It was not rest, it was peace. Rest she could not hope for yet. Rest for her guilty soul was not, at this stage, desirable. She did not think of it any further than refusing to court it implied. But she was at peace with herself. Her conscience had nothing to say to which her understanding and her heart did not assent. And not only so. There is more than this needed for peace, especially to the young. She had formed a resolve to repair, as far as repentance could accomplish it, the great wrong she felt she had done. And to complete this, she had confessed her resolve ; and this was only a preparation for confessing her sin in ears she entirely trusted. She trusted no one more than her father. But to unburden herself to him would, she thought, only lay upon his heart an unavailing sorrow. And there were many obvious reasons why she should make her auricular confession to Mrs. Nelsy. She hoped that, after she had made it, she would find rest, as the resolve to speak to her had secured the peace she was now at with her own mind and conscience.

Cecilia had hold of the near end of a great truth in

all this. To find utterance is often the first step towards the soul's great salvation. If we have spiritual strength to cast our burden on the great Listener to the soul's confessions, it is safest and best. If, failing this, we get another whom we understand and trust, to bear our burden of guilt, it often helps to weaken the power of evil. Any attempt at setting up an institution to meet this hidden secret of the soul is sure to damage the efficacy of the utterance. But such a confession as Cecilia had resolved to make to Mrs. Nelsy could only end in good.





CHAPTER XXXIII.



RS. NELSY was reading a letter when Cecilia called that morning.

Mrs. Nelsy. I thought it would be you, dear, when I heard the bell ringing so early. Good morning ! I hope you enjoyed yourself last night ? But what a woe-begone look we have got this morning ? Have you not been asleep ? Old woman and all as I am, I am ready to begin the dance again.

Cecilia. I shall not go to any more parties. I wish I had not come last night. Although you were so good and kind—

Mrs. Nelsy. You alarm me, child ! Surely nobody said anything to hurt your feelings ? I was so happy to see how everybody was charmed with you.

Cecilia. I am afraid I shall have to make you sorry you were happy on my account. I deserve kindness from no one.

Cecilia then told all about the unfortunate question, and the word 'monkey' she had used, and which had haunted her like an angel of wrath ever since. She told

it all with such an air of simplicity, that it would have disarmed a much more obdurate judge than Mrs. Nelsy. Mrs. Nelsy was disarmed, but said, 'It was a pity, dear. I am afraid it would hurt poor Louisa's feelings. She loves her little plain-looking brother very dearly. And deservedly so ; for James Farel is a manly young gentleman. But I daresay it will be all right with Louisa. And I know she will say nothing about it. Her discretion is equal to her goodness of heart. She has pardoned you already, you may be sure. And I think it will be wiser to say nothing more of the matter.'

Cecilia. I must see Louisa ! I must tell her how deep my sorrow is for that thoughtless, trifling, wicked word. I wish her to know that I did not believe its own meaning when I applied it to her brother.

Mrs. Nelsy. I know that, dear. And I know that the habit of using words that sting causes people to overlook many an amiable quality. It makes bitter enemies. And what is more serious, it grieves generous hearts. It is unworthy of ourselves to fail to appreciate the nobleness of a spirit to such an extent as even thoughtlessly to give it pain. Shall I send for Louisa ?

Cecilia. I don't know how I can look her in the face, but I shall try.

Mrs. Nelsy. The attempt will secure its reward, my dear.

Mrs. Nelsy sent for Louisa, and, while they were waiting for her, tried to direct the conversation to some of the curiosities of Paris. But Cecilia's attention was not

to be diverted nor fixed. She was hewing away with an ivory paper-cutter at the uncut leaves of a book. After a little Louisa came into the room with her own sweet smile brightening up her eyes, and giving a graceful finish to every feature of her face.

‘Good morning, Mrs. Nelsy ; and good morning, Miss Halley. I hope the pleasures of last night have not turned into weariness this morning, and that you will be in as good spirits for an evening at our house next Monday. Mamma has commissioned me to announce the important fact that you may expect an invitation.

Cecilia. And do you really bring the message ? and may I hope to be allowed to enter your door ?

Louisa. And why not ? Has any one been saying—

Cecilia. I have told Mrs. Nelsy all. Oh ! will you forgive me for that wicked word last night—wicked and foolish !

Louisa. What word ?

Cecilia. The question I asked when your brother came into the room.

Louisa. Oh, about my brother ? I am so used to it. Poor James ! he is certainly not so tall and good-looking as he is good. But my ears are so accustomed to curious remarks about him, I let them pass as quickly as I can. For all love James who know him. But I must confess that this is the first time I have met any one generous enough to feel sorry for such a saying, and to confess grief for uttering a clever satire.

Mrs. Nelsy. You are two good girls, and worthy of each other.

Louisa had to go away, and she kissed Cecilia, and said, with the least bit of her deep emotion not quite concealed, 'I shall quite long for next Monday evening.'

Cecilia remarked to Mrs. Nelsy after she left, that she could sit down and cry for an hour.

Mrs. Nelsy. We have had crying enough. It is a beautiful day, and I shall take advantage of it, and go and make a few calls. Will you join me?

Cecilia. I am not dressed—

Mrs. Nelsy. Well enough dressed. I am going to call on a friend of mine who will be glad to see you in any dress. It is a poor widow with a family I take some interest in.

Cecilia. I was thinking of some of my friends near St. Symphorien yesterday. But you have not much time, I should think, for such duties in Paris.

Mrs. Nelsy. There is time enough for duty everywhere. That reminds me, your father says he is going to stay a month longer in Paris. I think you would be the better of taking a few lessons in drawing and English while he is here.

Cecilia. Will there be time?

Mrs. Nelsy. Time enough for duty at all times, as well as everywhere. Hours are days, and minutes are hours, when we know how to use them. And to use them is to work. People who are willing to work don't

often get merely labour for their pains. Work ! work is the great law of happiness at every age in every age. I always look for a lady's work-basket when I am shown into her room. And if there is not one, and no trace of something as good, I never care to see her again.

Cecilia. You would like my work-basket at St. Radegonde. It was my mother's.

Mrs. Nelsy. And she knew the great law of work ; no one knew it better, few so well.

Mrs. Nelsy was making up a bag with a variety of things to eat and wearing things, while she was saying this ; and looking to what she had in her purse, she signified to Cecilia that she was ready.

Cecilia set out with a sense of having made an advance in life, inasmuch as she was now going to do in Paris what she had often done around St. Radegonde and in St. Symphorien.

But a narrow dark entrance and a winding damp staircase cooled her ardour a little for an appreciable period of time. Looking at Mrs. Nelsy, she felt inclined to indulge in one of a class of questions which a number of young people put. These questions, it is true, are only proofs of ignorance, unless when, from their deeper earnestness, they imply innocence. At best they are the innocence of ignorance. But young people who have got into the knack of calling little things by large names, are in the habit of calling them philosophical questions. And undoubtedly they are as important as many of the questions put by people who



I have such a clever worker.—Page 206.

are called philosophers, and who are, at least, older than Cecilia Halley was when she put her question. It was this: 'How old may a lady be supposed to be before she is allowed to give up such works of charity as these?'

It will be seen there was just the shadow of the bondage of the duty of charity in the mind which felt this question. The glorious liberty of duty is not the lot of girls of the age of Cecilia, however good they may be. Mrs. Nelsy's conduct defeated any attempt at answering the question.

Mrs. Nelsy knocked at a door Cecilia could not see. 'Oh, mother, the lady!' was heard by her before she saw any further.

Mrs. Nelsy moved forward, and Cecilia followed her and saw the mother and her four children. They had mounted fifteen stages of stairs, or eight stories.

When Cecilia got inside, the mother was making vain attempts to keep her children at a respectful distance from Mrs. Nelsy. A little girl was bold enough to touch with the point of her fore-finger the well-stuffed bag Mrs. Nelsy carried. This familiarity won for her a kiss from Mrs. Nelsy, and the privilege of full possession of all that the wonderful bag contained. Her mother took charge of it for her. Mrs. Nelsy said to the widow,—'I have such a clever worker under my orders at present, and for a short time to come, Josephine, I must take the measure of the two little girls. We cannot let opportunities slip.'

Mrs. Nelsy took the measure with all the neatness and celerity of a practised hand. She had something to say to Josephine, in a whisper, while the children were crowding round Cecilia, touching her gold chain, and giving short caresses to her muff.

After they had left and got down all the stairs again, and were so much at their ease as to let thought take wing,—‘My mother was a good lady like Mrs. Nelsy,’ said Cecilia to herself.





CHAPTER XXXIV.

EVERY day had passed with Cecilia like a dream since she came to Paris. The next morning after this day of deep sorrowing to begin with, and entire joy at being forgiven and being allowed to join Mrs. Nelsy in her mission of goodness, a note was put into Cecilia's hand by Sophia. It was from Mrs. Nelsy, and it only said,—‘I have given my foot a sprain, will you come and spend the day with me?’

This news startled Cecilia. Every project for the day was dispelled. She lost no time in replying to the note by way of being beside Mrs. Nelsy.

‘You have been climbing up another of those endless slippery stairs. I wonder you did not break your leg!’ was Cecilia's first salute, before she had time for ceremony.

After all due attention to kindly ‘good-mornings,’ and the few sweeteners of the day's first meeting, Mrs. Nelsy said,—

‘You are wrong about my sprain, dear; I managed

to procure it in my own room here. Charity has plenty of unjust charges brought against her without being blamed for the clumsiness of an old woman, which, by the way, charity is not. Are you a good nurse?’

‘I have tried it,’ said Cecilia.

‘That means you are an excellent nurse, and I am a capital patient,’ was Mrs. Nelsy’s interpretation of Cecilia’s looks. ‘So we two shall manage this business of slight indisposition nicely. I have almost no pain. I only want to remain still for a day or so. We shall work and talk, and you will read to me. Have you guessed who the clever worker is I mentioned to Josephine?’

‘No; but I should be glad to assist her,’ was the answer.

Mrs. Nelsy pointed Cecilia to a parcel in a corner. Cecilia brought it, and Mrs. Nelsy began to cut, shape, and sew with all the elegance and expedition of a finished Parisian needle-woman. Cecilia worked with a will at all Mrs. Nelsy told her. She was the clever worker.

‘Tom Thumb has arrived to add to all our other gaieties,’ said Mrs. Nelsy.

‘I should think it a miserable exhibition,’ replied Cecilia. ‘Wouldn’t it be better to let these poor victims of stunted growth hide their defect in obscurity?’

Mrs. Nelsy. They have no desire that way themselves. History has preserved the names of one or two rather famous Tom Thumbs. You will remember Jeffrey Hudson, who was born in 1619. He was, at eight

years of age, presented in a pie to Henrietta Maria, the queen of Charles the First of England, by the Duchess of Buckingham. At thirty, he was eighteen inches high by English measure, or seventeen by ours. At this age, nature took a fancy to let him grow, and he ultimately reached the height of three feet nine inches, English measure.

Cecilia. The mischievous little dwarf!

Mrs. Nelsy. He was proud of his proportions. He used to take great pleasure in telling how, when he was young, he would be seen coming out of the pocket of some courtier in the middle of some court festivity, to the great surprise of all who were present.

Cecilia. The pocket would be made for the purpose?

Mrs. Nelsy. It would be huge for a pocket. There was once a Polish dwarf, called Borwilawski, who was celebrated for the versatility of his talents. He wrote his own history. He had quite a European reputation. But he also began to grow when he was beyond the age at which other people stop.

Cecilia. Isn't that strange?

Mrs. Nelsy. It is as unaccountable as the arrestment of their growth at first. But the real historical dwarf was Baby. He was born in Vosges, in 1741. His skeleton is to be seen in the Museum of Natural History. He was so small when he was born that he was carried in a plate laid over with tow to the baptismal font. His first cradle was a large stuffed wooden shoe. He was brought to the Court of King Stanislas, for

whom he formed a sincere affection. The king really liked the dwarf in return, and was anxious to procure for him a certain amount of education. But Baby would not condescend to learn to read. He would never learn anything but dancing and music. He continued a lively gentle little creature till he was fifteen. He then began to show signs of unmistakeable old age ; and he died at twenty-two of this disease which time takes longer to bring about in larger people. He was thirty-three inches tall at his death ; and four of these inches were attained during the last seven years of his life. He was only twenty-nine inches at fifteen.

Cecilia. Your history of dwarfs quite excites my curiosity. We must go and see Tom Thumb.

Louisa had come in while Mrs. Nelsy was speaking, and she said she would go too.

‘I wish you would go, Louisa, and look round the stationary curiosities of this native city of yours,’ said Mrs. Nelsy.

‘Well, I know Vienna and Geneva better than I know Paris, I must admit,’ replied the imperturbable Louisa.

‘Like all true Parisians,’ remarked Mrs. Nelsy. ‘If at any time a friend from the country wishes one of them to act as guide, the stranger’s guide-book to Paris is indispensable.’

‘It really is ridiculous ; but I must join you in some of your rambles, Mrs. Nelsy,’ said Louisa.

‘When this sprain in my ankle rights itself again,’ was the form of assent.

This pleasant day came to an end, and Cecilia was really sorry to go and leave Mrs. Nelsy.

A letter from Maurice put Cecilia a little about when she got home. He spoke a great deal of how dreadfully he and Charles missed her. In a postscript, he mentioned that Sally looked very tired, and that Jacob had caught a bad cold.

One morning Cecilia was coming out of the church of St. Roch, when a young girl, pale and thin, addressed her, saying,—

‘You have a mother, miss? Oh! come and see my mother.’

‘Where do you live?’ asked Cecilia.

‘Round the corner,’ was the reply.

Sophia would not hear of her young mistress going with the girl. ‘There are such cheats about,’ said this careful damsel. ‘Charity must be prudent.’

Cecilia went, however. The stair was clean, and its walls were oil-painted. After the fifteenth stage, a sort of ladder took them into a room in which a poor needle-woman and this child of hers lived.

The mother looked jaundiced and haggard, and would have blushed had she had red blood enough in her veins, when she saw her starved child bringing in two strangers.

‘Mother, the thought just struck me, and the young lady came at once,’ said the child apologetically.

‘Can I be of any service?’ was Cecilia’s question, and it looked out of her eyes as well as came from her lips.

‘I don’t know what to speak of first,’ said the poor invalid.

‘Tell me what you feel worst,’ said Cecilia, tenderly.

‘Well, the rent,’ replied the frail mother, as nearly blushing as she was capable of. ‘We are two terms behind. Two pounds a term for this little room. If we could only pay one-half, the landlord is not hard on us.’

‘My father will pay the whole,’ said Cecilia.

‘Nourishment for my poor little Amelia is what I would fain mention besides,’ came bursting out from the mother’s heart. ‘If you would just mention her to your mother, she would know why I am so bold.’

‘I have no mother,’ said Cecilia quietly. ‘But I am sure my father will do what I wish him.’

‘My poor child has worked since she was ten for fourteen hours a day. We can get so little pay for straining the eyes out of our heads,’ said the mother, weeping ; and the tears found channels in which almost to lose themselves in the wrinkles of that furrowed face, not old but aged.

‘I shall bring my father to see you,’ said Cecilia. ‘Good-bye till then.’

Sophia was not a bad sort of girl, but this getting up and down garret-stairs was more than she had bargained for. ‘Lucky are they, upon my word,’ said Sophia to herself, ‘who fall in with young ladies that have nothing else to do than throw away their father’s millions. All very well for Sisters of Mercy ! But I’ll tell master ; and

his daughter shall not scour the garrets of Paris if I can help it.'

At the same time Cecilia was saying,—'How good my father is! I can help the poor to my heart's desire. And to think that there are people in Paris who have not daily bread! What a meaning there is in the Lord's Prayer to them!'

Cecilia told her father all she had done. He approved both of her kindness and her prudence. Since she had prudently left it to him to pay what money was wanted, he would go with her at once and see the poor woman. They went, and, after a little inquiry, Mr. Halley paid the rent, and left something for comfort besides. The end of this little incident of charity was both sad and gladdening. The poor invalid mother died in a few weeks, and Mrs. Nelsy undertook to look after the little starved and over-worked orphan.





CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. HALLEY met an old Calcutta acquaintance on the boulevard one day, whose name was Wells. He was an Englishman, and he had made and realized a great fortune in India, and had come home to Europe to enjoy it with his wife and an only daughter. Alice Wells was of the same age as Cecilia. They had lived three years in Italy, and she spoke Italian, and knew the art treasures of Rome,—the treasures of art addressed to the ear, as well as to the eye. Cecilia was slightly afraid of her at first, but that was soon over. Alice literally captivated Cecilia, and for a while held her in thrall. Alice's parents had a similar influence over Cecilia's father. This English family had an insatiable thirst for pleasure. Their pursuit of the fleeting goddess was restless. At theatres, concerts, and parties they rushed on in the hunt and loud halloo without ever drawing rein.


Alice was remarkably gay in her dress—a little loud indeed. Mr. Halley wanted Cecilia to keep up with her.

And Cecilia, after a slight resistance consented, and soon began to like it. Mrs. Nelsy did not take part in their councils at this time. A day spent with her would have restored Cecilia's balance. But there was not a day to spare. Alice Wells's plans did not permit of it. And Cecilia had not yet learned to read the writing on every wall within which Alice allured her—'Vanity and vexation of spirit.' Only experience can open any eyes to read these words of the law, and to understand them and lay them to heart. Cecilia was inexperienced. Her father's conduct is only to be considered the momentary reaction of an active nature against enforced rest—or idleness, as he would call it.

Cecilia's charities in Paris were not so pressing now. And her humble friends at St. Symphorien and St. Radegonde were all but forgotten.

The only study carried on was English, and Alice was her teacher. Alice made merry with Cecilia's blunders; but the amount of colloquial English this brought into play was profitable.

At length the conquest was all but complete. By the advice of these newly enthroned controllers of their destiny, Mr. Halley made up his mind to purchase a large house in Paris. He and Cecilia went and looked at a splendid mansion in the fashionable part of Paris. It had an entrance from the Champs Élysées. This was to be their winter residence. Mr. Halley had no doubt Maurice and Charles would hail the arrangement with rapture. Alice had arranged many summer tours



for them all. 'First, you will come next summer, and stay at our house, which is large enough for a prince and his party. It is in the Isle of Wight. We shall go and see the Derby. There will be lots of regattas. Travel is education. You will then compare France and England intelligently.'

Cecilia was charmed, and a new world was opening wider and wider with delight upon her unchastened imagination.

The day came round when the bargain for the purchase of the house was to be closed. Mr. Halley and Cecilia were dressed, and just going out to visit his agent, and tell him to call on the agent for the sale, and buy, when a letter was handed to Cecilia. It was from Maurice, and, however strange it may sound, Cecilia was not in raptures at seeing it. Nay, it must not be concealed, there was a sort of gray, chilly mist of obtrusive self-reproach hovering over her spirit all this time.

She was quite reluctant to open this letter. But she could not leave it unopened, and she read it. It was as loving as ever. But it repeated in the body of the letter—not in a postscript this time—that Jacob's cold was very bad. It went on to say, 'The country is beautiful now. You have been three months away, and if you stay much longer, you will be too late to see the lilies in their splendour. The birds are singing from morning to evening. I fancy they miss you, and are trying to sing you back to them.'

Alice entered when Cecilia had just read the letter, and clear, bright, and gay as ever, rang out, 'Good morning, my angel— What! crying! and tears! you alarm me, darling! A letter! Are your brothers ill?'

'No,' said Cecilia, wiping the stealthy tears, 'but our old negro is dying, I am afraid.'

'The year we left Calcutta, ten of our men died,' was Alice's remark, and there was no verbal explanation added.

'But Jacob has been a great deal to me,' replied Cecilia, and for the first time a vague idea dawned upon her mind that Alice had not a tender heart.

'Come and let us have a ride,' proposed Alice.

'Not at present,' was Cecilia's disposal.

'Oh, I forgot, you are going to purchase the house to-day,' was the deepest reason Alice could discern. 'You good-hearted darling that you are, good-bye, I shall see you and the new house to-morrow.'

Mr. Halley entered. Cecilia showed him the letter, and expressed a wish to go home at once.

'We must arrange about the house,' said her father, 'we can go in a few days.'

'No, papa, let the arrangement about the house lie over. And let us go home to-day—this evening.'

'But I am to some extent committed,' said her father, who was a just man.

'We shall be back again, and when you return—'

'Well, well, darling!' was Mr. Halley's completion of Cecilia's sentence.

Sophia was once more bewildered by the firmness and energy of her young mistress's conduct. Following her up and down stairs had tried this damsel's legs. Helping her to pack pained her reluctant arms as well.

Mr. Halley and Cecilia called to say good-bye to Mrs. Nelsy, who expressed the deepest concern and sympathy, and promised to take a run as far as Touraine to see them.

Alice received an affectionate note.

It was the beginning of March, but it had not been a rigorous winter. As they rushed on in the train towards Touraine, Cecilia left Paris behind her within a great deal more than without. The sight of the Loire was the first ray that cheered her up.

They reached Tours, but did not stop. They drove straight up towards St. Radegonde.

Sally nursed her valued friend, and the willing and sturdy sharer of her troubles and toils, night and day. Sophia had been left in Paris, out of respect to Sally's feelings. On the way through St. Symphorien, Mr. Halley and Cecilia halted to see Maurice and Charles, and to salute Mr. and Mrs. Delorme. As the carriage drew near St. Radegonde, Sally heard the noise and went to the door.

'I was sure you would come. It is what your mother would have done. And you are her image, my darling,' was Sally's hail to Cecilia.

'Is he conscious?' asked Cecilia.

'O yes! and happy. He is fuller of new ideas than ever. I am sure he has said things this night about his hopes and happiness that have made me weep like a child,' was the aged Sally's comforting response.

'Poor Jacob!' sighed Cecilia, and ran to his room. 'I have come to nurse you, Jacob,' she said to him with all her true heart untainted.

'Dis good for me, little missus. Jacob no go away, but he say good-bye, God bless ye, to good masters and little missus,' said the old man radiant.

'Have you much pain?' inquired Cecilia.

'No suffer pain. At least did suffer pain, fear might no say good-bye, God bless you,' was spoken in triumph.

'Do you see me, Jacob?' was sweetly asked.

'Me no need to see. Know little missus. Hear her sweet voice. Me pleased. God is good, very good to dis old nigger,' was the saying of a dying saint.

Mr. Halley and Maurice came into the room at this time. Cecilia was bedewing Jacob's hand with tears of the tenderest affection.

'Little missus no weep. Me too old. Can work no more. Me go dere to good missus. Listen! Listen!' was said in holy rapture.

'You will wait there for us, Jacob?' said Cecilia, weeping bitterly at last. 'We must part now.'

'Oh! no long,' were Jacob's last words.

That night the noble aspiring soul of this able man, whose goodness had elements of heroic greatness in it, was welcomed home again by God his Father.

Mr. Halley gave orders that Jacob's funeral should be conducted as solemnly and grandly as if he had been his brother in full right to his fortune.

A tomb with a faithful inscription still tells how Jacob was revered and loved.

Sally wept much in silence for her excellent friend. 'He has gone before, I soon shall follow,' was the burden of the most she said.

Jacob's tomb was much visited by more than the members of the family he served and loved so well. It became one of the objects to be visited at St. Symphorien. A tomb raised to a servant is always a tribute of affection which calls forth special attention and remark. But this servant was a negro; and it was altogether a new thing under the sun to the good people of Tours and its suburbs, to witness such honour to an African as a monument of affection for his memory.

The erection of this tomb was intended by Mr. Halley only as an honour to Jacob. He thought of nothing but his long, faithful, and affectionate attentions to his family, when he ordered it and approved of the design submitted to him. But it led to other results. He and all his family were now more than ever objects of interest to their neighbours. Curious speculation regarding them gave place to respectful regard for them. It was now felt that a little colony of exceptionally good people had come out of one of the great commercial centres, to settle among them in the quieter and less exciting rural life of Touraine.

Jacob had won his rest and his crown. His had not been a lonely life. His affections had been deeply engaged. It is necessary to our happiness that our affections be stirred to their depths by some object on which they may lavish themselves. There is no one relationship in which that object must always and necessarily stand to us. It need not be the closest relationship. It may be where there is neither consanguinity nor affinity. These are the most usual, and the most natural. But Jacob had no such relations to love all these happy years of sorrow and of joy. Neither had Sally. But they both loved the children of their revered master and mistress. And this kind of love has been a living portion to the soul of many a faithful servant.





CHAPTER XXXVI.

JACOB was sorely missed every hour of the day. His place could never be filled again. Thus had he lived to another of life's highest purposes. The mere work which he used to do had to be distributed among four different hirelings. As to his anticipations of the wants of the family, and his inventions which surprised and pleased them so much, they all died with him.

Cecilia felt the influences of St. Radegonde reviving all her former interest in its surroundings. She sincerely mourned for Jacob. And she silently lamented her own folly in Paris. It was the most telling lesson life had afforded her of faults and defects she knew nothing of when Mrs. Nelsy referred to them a few weeks before.

Cecilia went about the house now with the quick earnest eye of the real lady head of the family,—an industrious housekeeper. She saw in the garden many of Jacob's unfinished plans, and tried to get them carried out; while, at the same time, it was with a sort

of pang that she thought of a stranger's hand being put to work begun by him.

Jacob's favourite goldfinch died a few days before he was finally laid up with his fatal cold. How much of the preparation for that lamented victory of this disease was to be traced to the awful morning of the inundation? As to the goldfinch, Jacob intended to stuff it for Cecilia. He knew that it was as much a favourite of hers as of his own. But the hand of death was too soon upon his cunning hand for this other embodiment of his affection to receive outward shape.

Cecilia, now that she was so happy again at St. Rade-gonde, tried to account to herself for so nearly forgetting it. But she could not. And neither can deep dark sinners account for their crooked ways. Cecilia had only had a remote vision of the shadow of the receding trail of pleasure and folly. The most daring votaries of sinful pleasure are often people who at first, and indeed all along, intend as little to join in her rites and orgies, as Cecilia meant to forget her poor and her charities. No wonder that the stories tell us of dark spirits unseen, who drag unwilling victims through sin into stricken sorrow.

When Sally was looking over Cecilia's new wardrobe, as it issued dress by dress from the trunk,—‘Where shall I put this showy trick?’ she would say. ‘Was this a disguise?’ she would ask again.

All was taken earnest note of by Cecilia, even when

she said with seeming heedlessness,—‘Oh, let them lie still in the trunk!’

The gray cold mist of self-reproach began to clear away as the vacant symbols of Parisian vanity were buried again.

Mr. Halley did not like certain expressions which he could read in Cecilia’s countenance. It is to be remembered that we have not had any evidence of self-reproach in him. It was not exactly sadness in Cecilia which disturbed him. It was a constant pre-occupation which he thought unnecessary in his child, and in her circumstances. He knew if there was anything troubling her that Cecilia could tell, she would tell him. So he awaited her time for this confidence.

Amelia was one of the first to come and see Cecilia after her return. When Cecilia saw the true friend she had so far forgotten as not to write to her, although there was no reproach in Amelia’s looks,—‘Forgive me,’ she said beseechingly.

Only now did Amelia seem to know there was anything to forgive. She answered,—‘Well, I have had plenty of time to think of you, to be angry with you, to forgive you, and do all the other things proper in the circumstances; but I must also tell you that Charles never let a week pass without coming to tell us all about you.’

This was very attentive of Charles. Did it mean anything beyond itself? Cecilia and Amelia became

more intimate than ever. As there was more good sense in their friendship now, there was also deeper love.

The Delormes were no less delighted at the return of Mr. Halley and Cecilia. Blanche was especially radiant.

‘You will not go away again?’ she said earnestly to Cecilia. ‘I cannot be good when you are not at home.’

Cecilia laughed heartily at many of the over-done compliments she received. Yet it was not all a thing to be laughed at. Was there no pointing of the finger of duty in these longings of the hearts she had been brought into contact with?

Whenever she went out of the house, the children ran up to her, and were overjoyed when she patted their heads, or were asked to run some little message.

The little deaf-mute, Madeline, would cling to Cecilia, and make all sorts of signs to her of her silent though not unexpressed opinion, that it was quite unnecessary she should ever go from home again. Her father, John the ropemaker, told Cecilia that Madeline had gone in search of her every day, and when she did not find her, had wept and shown signs of bad temper, which were quite new to his experience of his own child.

Again, were there no sacred calls of duty in all these longings of many hearts?

One afternoon Cecilia and her father were sitting together, when the conversation got heavier and heavier, till Mr. Halley fell sound asleep in his chair.

Cecilia looked up from her work, and, gazing earnestly at her father, said to her own heart,—

‘How much my father needs rest! And he would certainly find no rest in Paris. They speak about our being free to live as we choose. But it is not so. We must feel the surge of the constant commotion all around us. We must see, hear, go, and come. My father only encounters it for my sake. He thinks it his duty to bring me into society. Not only so; he tries to make me feel the loss of my mother as little as possible. It will still further ruin his health if he keeps making this vain attempt. For the best of fathers cannot be as a mother to us; no, not even in a drawing-room or at a dance. Only a mother’s eye can look the care we seek even there. Mrs. Nelsy is one of the most perfect of good women. I love her with all my heart. But she is not my mother.’

Mr. Halley awoke, and said,—

‘I seem to have been asleep. Have you been sitting there all the time?’

Cecilia. Yes, papa dear, and I have been thinking over one or two things. I want your opinion on them.

Mr. Halley. Are you not quite sure about them?

Cecilia. I have been thinking, papa, that you should give up all thought about that house in Paris.

Mr. Halley. Well, I think my opinion on that will not be out of place. And, to begin with, you surprise me very much. You seemed very much pleased with the house; and I know you are not fickle. And—

Cecilia. But, papa dear, listen to me a moment. I don't think it would suit you to live in Paris. You need rest and quiet. Society does not allow of this. And if the damage that the climate of India has done your health is ever to be repaired, it will not be in the bustle of Paris; and to tell you the truth, dear papa, my heart does not approve of the way I lived latterly in that city of temptations.

Mr. Halley. My dear child, we don't need to be all the year round in Paris. We can divide our time between town and country. It is my duty to introduce you to society. What would the world think of your father, with all the fortune Providence has favoured him with, if he cooped you up a rustic maiden at St. Radegonde?

Cecilia. My dear father, I spent my happy childhood at St. Radegonde; and it was here I first saw you, and it was here I last saw her.

Mr. Halley. I quite understand all your tender feelings, dear. As for me, I am delighted with this as my home. But I am not thinking of myself; it is you, dear.

Cecilia. If you will forgive me, father, you are wrong there, I think. I regard this as my proper place; and I do not think society, as far as it has any right to an opinion, is of a different way of thinking. I cannot disregard all those kind hearts that seem so pleased to see me here again. And good and all as dear Mrs. Nelsy is, I feel my heart is better with Sally.

Mr. Halley. Are you in earnest?

Cecilia. I am indeed.

Mr. Halley. How old are you?

Cecilia. Sixteen years and six months.

Mr. Halley. I am afraid your sense of duty to me is misleading you; and that you will regret slighted opportunities when they cannot be recalled.

Cecilia. I have no fear of that.

Mr. Halley. And your brothers? Are your plans to lay restraints on them?

Cecilia. My brothers have no wish to leave Touraine. They like their occupations and their situations; and I suspect, if all their dearest feelings were known, they would be seen to be very much in favour of my view.

Mr. Halley. But I feel to some degree committed. I went a long way towards the purchase; and I only put it off till my return.

Cecilia. This is a serious consideration, and it is one which your experience will enable you to judge of better than I can. Is it quite insurmountable?

Mr. Halley. Oh, no; not quite. But one does not like the sort of remarks it sets busy people free to make.

Cecilia. I should not mind their remarks, papa, if I thought I had not done wrong; and, besides, if you are not going to Paris—

Mr. Halley. Ay, there you have the full advantage of all your inexperience. If we could only carry this feeling of childhood into manhood, and be less in bondage to the opinions of people who have no right to an

opinion, we should be juster and kinder. And what makes it all the stranger is, that the people who hold us in subjection to their opinions have as little power over us as they have right to interfere.

Cecilia. But you will think no more of the house at present, papa.





CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE conversation was broken in upon at this stage by the arrival of a carriage. It was Sophia, who had herself conveyed in this manner uninvited. She had been troubled with two thoughts. First, and most important, she thought she was forgotten by those on whose memories she fancied she had established a claim. Second, and equally serious, she could not conceive her mistress dressing herself in any endurable fashion without her assistance. When Sophia arrived at Tours, she ordered a carriage to convey Miss Halley's lady's-maid to the castle of St. Radegonde. When the waggish driver announced the castle, the lady's lady felt insulted. She would not come out of the carriage. She began to call the coachman some names which ladies are not supposed to be familiar with. 'This Mr. Halley's castle!' She knew better.

Sophia had on a very nice bonnet. The country people, therefore, showed her marks of very great respect. But the coachman did not show any of the

civility of his class. He said, with a shrug to the people who gathered round,—

‘It is a new chamber-maid for Miss Halley.’

Then Sophia’s bonnet ceased to deserve respect. And she was pretty well bantered about the castle she had come to serve in.

Cecilia came out and delivered as well as amazed her maid. Sophia opened her eyes to their widest. A word from Cecilia made her lessen her eyes at many unexpected things she saw.

Sophia was presented in character to Sally. It was now Sally’s turn to open her eyes to their widest. Again a word from Cecilia made her lessen them at this unexpected lady’s maid. Sally treated the novelty with civility. She led her and all her Parisian elegance up to a garret. And there the lady’s lady sat down, and sighed and sadly smiled.

Cecilia at first thought she could turn Sophia to some account, as a sort of general assistant. But it would not do. She was simply useless at St. Radegonde. And a few days at the same place had restored Cecilia to her senses and her simplicity. She had certainly no use for Sophia at her toilette. That would have been ridiculous out of Paris. And if not, there would have been some degree of cruelty to Sally in it. At least, Cecilia thought so.

Cecilia saw there was nothing for it but to pay Sophia well, and give her leave to go home again. Accordingly, next day, she told her that as they had made up their

minds not to come to Paris the following winter, it would be necessary to leave her free to look for another situation. She thanked her for her excellent services, gave her more money than paid her, and let Sophia feel herself free to go, although she might stay with them a little, if she wanted a change of air.

Sophia could not bear the country. She spoke of Paris with raptures, as dear Paris, and her Paris. So she did not avail herself of any more change of air, but bundled herself off, without loss of time, from St. Radegonde to her own dear Paris.

Mr. Halley did not quite approve of Cecilia's conduct in all this. He thought Sophia should have been kept as a lady's-maid. A rich man likes to see proofs of his wealth in his own house. And it is not to be forgotten that Mr. Halley was a rich Frenchman. And he likes to see his wealth put to the proof better than any other rich man.

But Cecilia had begun to exercise an influence over her father different from the natural influence which her charms, as his only daughter, had over him, an exceptionally good father. She began to feel she could gain the victory when their intentions were opposite. She claimed her right to victory in this matter of Sophia.

Cecilia adopted a plan which was a partial carrying out of the one she proposed to Sophia. She engaged a young woman to take a sort of general charge of the house under Sally.

Sally, however, in her extreme old age, reigned

supreme at St. Radegonde, as special lady's-maid to Cecilia.

The changes effected in the domestic arrangements did not dispel the charm of simplicity which hovered over that little house and its liberal wealth.

One day Cecilia very much astonished her father by saying,—

‘Papa, I think you are getting idle at St. Radegonde. The estate is too small to keep you usefully employed. And an inland life seems not to have sufficient variety for you. Why do you not buy that coast residence down at St. Cyr, which Colonel Drury was speaking to you about the other day?’

Mr. Halley was surprised, but a great deal more pleased with the question.

‘What a capital idea!’ he said. ‘We shall go to-morrow and look at it. But then it is quite a mansion, and Miss Cecilia Halley is an incurable devotee to little houses, where nobody can move or stand straight up.’

‘Miss Cecilia has some large ideas, a few good ideas, and a limited number of beautiful ideas,’ was the reply in the same grimly laughing strain.

‘What else were you going to say?’ asked her father, who watched every serious occupation of her features.

‘Nothing— But, papa, will you submit to one condition?’

‘I seem to submit to a great many,’ was Mr. Halley’s truthful consent.



Miss Cecilia has some large ideas.--Page 234.

'You are very good, and you will give up all thoughts of a residence in Paris?' said Cecilia.

'Anything more?' smiled her father.

'Yes, one other condition,' said his dominant daughter. 'We shall come every year at vintage time, and spend the season at this dear home of my childhood.'

'Well, we shall see,' said her father, not quite so full of assent.

'Do you really not like St. Radegonde?' asked Cecilia, who really did not like the hesitation her father evidently felt.

'I like St. Radegonde beyond all places in the world, my dear. There is every reason why I should. It is ours because it was your mother's. It is thus the place where I can keep up the most lively communion with her living memory.' This was the reply.

'Perhaps I misinterpret your feelings,' responded Cecilia. 'And I must remember what you have just said, when I see you again in one of those moods which have often made me unhappy.'

'You must not observe an old man's moods too closely, my dear,' said her father.

After all had been said, Cecilia felt there was an unexplained reservation in her father's assent to her proposal, that they should spend every vintage time at St. Radegonde. But the fact must not be forgotten, that Mr. Halley was a good deal older than his daughter, Cecilia. He had two sons. And he had been making use of his eyes, and putting a few things together which,

notwithstanding all her cleverness, had escaped the notice of Cecilia. Mr. Halley had begun to think, that St. Radegonde might be occupied all the year round in such a way as would render it not altogether convenient for the whole family to call the house theirs for the vintage season.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE deep shadow of a dark cloud had been hanging over the happy family at St. Radegonde since Jacob's death. Sally had been mysteriously ill. She never seemed refreshed in the morning, and she would never own that she had not slept. She frequently retired to her bedroom through the day only to come out again, and always to seem inclined to go back. Often she would go half-way up stairs to her room, and return with an expression on her face which seemed to Mr. Halley to be more the look of one who was scared, than of one who suffered from any faintness or general feebleness of health.

Mr. Halley observed these symptoms more closely than any of his children. They noticed, indeed, that Sally's look of weariness and depression was something they had never observed even when she had to work hard for them through the day, and to nurse their sick mother by night as well. But they attributed it all

to her great age. Sally was now numbering years which added to the allotted span. She was beyond the age of threescore years and ten. And this explained the difficulty that was felt by Maurice and Charles at all events.

Mr. Halley became daily more uneasy about Sally. He felt the delicacy of every pure-hearted man. He did not like to ask Sally any questions. At last, however, he told Cecilia that he thought Sally had better send for the doctor. And Cecilia was not unprepared for the hint.

Cecilia had been making her own observations. She and Sally had been in the habit of sitting together a little in Cecilia's room before her aged nurse retired to her own room for the night. And a strange unwillingness to go away had been quite noticeable for a few nights. This had only been since Jacob died. And putting Sally's frequent retirement to her room at all manner of irregular times through the day along with this ill-concealed shrinking from it at night, Cecilia was really puzzled. She made many kindly inquiries of Sally if she was quite well, and the answers, and the manner in which they were given, only made Cecilia all the more anxious.

The evening of the day in which the foregoing conversation took place was full of anxiety to the whole family. They were all now aware that there was something wrong with Sally. And what it was, none of them had the remotest guess.

‘I never presented to myself,’ said Mr. Halley to his three children, ‘how lonely her life must have been all these years since she has been without your mother to unbosom herself to.’

‘But she has been always perfectly confidential with Cissy,’ said Charles.

‘She could not be perfectly so,’ remarked Maurice, whose lawyer habits had given him a turn of looking closely into the meaning of words.

‘I never knew her keep anything from me,’ said Cecilia, with deep concern in the tones of her voice as well as in her whole manner.

‘You couldn’t know that,’ replied Maurice. ‘You could only know what she told you. What she has kept to herself nobody but herself knows. I agree with papa. And I am only sorry I have thought so little of the good old nurse’s loneliness.’

‘I shall step down and have some conversation with the doctor,’ said Mr. Halley.

‘Do you think it would be right to bring him, papa? You know Sally is a little peculiar, and she might feel hurt,’ said Cecilia.

‘I don’t intend to bring him,’ was Mr. Halley’s remark, as he was stepping towards the door.

The doctor was a sensible elderly gentleman. He had been an army surgeon, and had been abroad; so he and Mr. Halley had a great many pleasant chats together about other countries and other days. Mr. Halley did not introduce the matter as anything pain-

fully serious. He merely mentioned that they were all feeling a little anxious about Sally. He spoke of her apparent fatigue in the morning, her restlessness through the day, and her unwillingness to retire at night. The doctor asked a few questions, which did not seem to touch upon the points which were prominent to Mr. Halley's mind. He offered to go at once and see Sally, but this would not do. So Mr. Halley had to leave his excellent friend, with the remark to himself, which he had often made before, that doctors were no wiser in their ignorance of facts and symptoms than their neighbours. This, of course, is quite correct. It is well for his patients when a doctor both feels this and acts as if he was aware of it. Often, with full knowledge of symptoms and facts, the doctor is as much in the dark as either the patient or his anxious friends. A judicious doctor does not usually mention this. And it is as well. He knows how much the imagination has to do with the curing of diseases. He knows that the medicines he gives, however ugly their look or their taste, are often nothing more than quieting addresses to the restless fancy.

But Mr. Halley's doctor did not think there was anything seriously wrong with Sally, which might not be easily expected in the case of a woman of her years.

When Mr. Halley returned from the doctor's, he found that Cecilia and Sally had retired to Cecilia's room, as they were accustomed to do. Maurice and Charles had gone to bed, and it being later than he expected

the servants to sit up, he went and knocked at Cecilia's door. Cecilia opened the door and stepped outside herself, and said to her father that she would be down immediately. Mr. Halley could not but observe the oppressive anxiety on his daughter's face, and asked, in a voice undertoned from sympathy with Cecilia's looks, and with the half-whisper in which she spoke, if there was anything wrong.

'Oh! ah! no—nothing—nothing at all, papa, dear,' was Cecilia's reply, but the truth of it was not quite obvious to Mr. Halley.

Cecilia went back and said to Sally,—

'I'll sleep with you to-night. Now you must allow me.'

Sally. No, my darling. If it has had such an effect on my health, I cannot allow it to trouble you. I hope God will give me strength; and I will this very evening ask him what he wants, or why he cannot rest in his grave.

Cecilia. You really must allow me to tell papa. I don't say I am not afraid. But I have always thought the stories about such things were not true. I should not be at all afraid to sleep with you. And you say he always looks pleasant.

Sally. I never saw him look more pleasant. And, like himself, he seems afraid of frightening me. But he always has something to say.

Cecilia. About the markets, you think?

Sally. Yes! he has always his cloak on, and the round

slouched hat he used to wear when he went to the market.

Cecilia. It is very strange ! I wish you would allow me to go and tell papa.

Sally. Yes, that very cloak and hat. I hung them there the day after he was buried. And, another thing I have not told you, he always either comes out of that corner, and goes out by the door ; or comes in by the door, and goes away through that corner.

Cecilia. Papa was at the door a minute or two ago, do tell me to let him know all about it. Do you put out your light at night ?

Sally. No ! I cannot. I lower it so as not to let it be seen shining bright ; but I cannot put it out altogether. I seem to lie wishing for him to come and go. And then, when I am just going to sleep, he enters so quietly. Perhaps you had better tell papa after all.

Cecilia. Will you come with me ? Are you not afraid to remain in the room ?

Sally. Oh ! no ! dear. I cannot say I am afraid at all. But I am very much troubled. I am anxious to know what disturbs so good a man's rest in his grave.

Cecilia rose to go, and Sally bade her good-night. Mr. Halley was sitting in the room below anxiously waiting till Cecilia should come down. Maurice and Charles had gone to bed, thinking that, if there was anything ailing Sally, they would be as well out of the way when the doctor came, if he did come.

Cecilia came down, and told her father all that Sally had made known to her. It was in substance this :— Since the second night after Jacob was buried, he had every night appeared to Sally. He had not said anything. He looked sometimes as if he had something to ask, at other times as if he had something to tell. There was nothing angry or frowning in his looks. And when Sally tried to rise and speak to him, he always disappeared. Sally had borne this night after night. It was with difficulty at first that she kept from screaming. But now she had got over that feeling. At first she thought it might be merely owing to her own feelings. But now she was troubled thinking that Jacob had something to tell. It might be to the interest of the family to know it, she thought. At all events, she had been informed that Jacob never could rest till he had spoken to the one he had selected for his communication, whatever it might be. Feeling this, Sally had made several attempts to speak to him. But seeing that he always went away when she tried, she had begun only to-day to fear it might end in something with more harm in it than she had ever known to be in Jacob.

Mr. Halley had lived long in the East, and he knew the feelings of the people there. His first impulse was to think that Sally might have chosen the confidant of her mystery a little more wisely. Cecilia was young, and the excitement of such a terror coming so near might do her harm. Mr. Halley, however, checked this rising

surge of temper. He reflected on Cecilia's steadiness of character. He remembered that Sally had really no other one to put such a confidence in. He owned to himself, that he would have felt it strange if Sally had begun to tell him about it. And he knew that she had no neighbours to whom she might have recourse in such a peculiar trouble.

Mr. Halley's experience, however, suggested a question or two. He asked,—

'Is there anything that she notices always the same in these appearances of Jacob?'

Cecilia. I do not understand you, papa.

Mr. Halley. Does he come at any fixed hour?

Cecilia. No! She says that she lies long wishing he would come, and that it is always when she is just going to sleep.

Mr. Halley. Ah! that is one thing I wanted to know. Is he always dressed in the same clothes?

Cecilia. Yes. He has always on the cloak and hat he used to go to market with.

Mr. Halley. And you say that Sally feels as if he was evidently wishful to ask or to tell something?

Cecilia. So Sally says.

Mr. Halley. Does he always come in by the door, or go out by the door? Is there any particular direction that he moves in, either as coming or going?

Cecilia. She says that he either comes in by the door, and retires by the corner where his old cloak and hat are hanging—

Mr. Halley. Cloak and hat are hanging?

Cecilia. Yes; Sally hung them up in her room the day after Jacob was buried. At least, a day or two after he was buried.

Mr. Halley. Well; about that corner?

Cecilia. Sally says he always comes in by the door, and retires by the corner where the cloak and hat are hanging; or he comes in by that corner, and retires by the door.

Mr. Halley. Invariably so?

Cecilia. She asserts that it is so every time.

Mr. Halley felt that this last remark was the best hint he had received, and he determined he should be guided by it. He thought of many well authenticated cases of such troubles, and how they had been cured. He was confident he had a good patient to operate on in Sally. He knew that her mind was well balanced. He had begun to admire the firmness which had borne this trouble so long without giving any unnecessary alarm about it. He reflected also on the fact, that she would probably have endured her trouble till she suffered seriously, if not fatally, from it herself, if he and his family had not begun to give signs that they were taking notice of the state she betrayed by her looks that she was in. Mr. Halley remembered cases in which the visionary was cured by being told the facts that had happened by people who had watched with them unknown to themselves. The cloak and hat seemed to him to supply all the explanation needed. Sally was probably half-

asleep and half-awake when her excited imagination was goaded either by actually looking at these relics of Jacob, or by having seen them in the process of undressing. Indeed the fact, that she knew they were there, was enough to set the imagination at work in its own peculiar way.

After thinking over all this, Mr. Halley told Cecilia what he thought. He said, 'if they could only be beside Sally without her knowing it.'

'How would it do for you to go up and tell her what you have just said to me?' asked Cecilia. 'She is very tired to-night. I think it might help her to go to sleep.'

'Let us go quietly up,' replied her father.

Mr. Halley and Cecilia stepped very quietly to Sally's door. Notwithstanding all their care, a slight creak or two could not be helped on the old flooring of the landing outside of Sally's door. Cecilia had left the door slightly ajar. And when Mr. Halley was at the door and about to open it quietly, he heard Sally beginning to rustle and to mutter something, and pushing the door gently open, he saw all that passed. And Cecilia, coming close to her father, was also a witness of it. Sally was slightly raised in her bed, and was staring at the cloak and hat over in the corner. She looked anxious and scared. She murmured something to herself. And when she seemed in a considerable degree of distress, Mr. Halley made the slightest noise, and Sally looked round upon him and Cecilia.

Mr. Halley smiled, and Sally gave a sort of faint scared smile back again, and Cecilia went up to her and put her arms about her neck and kissed her.

Mr. Halley begged the pardon of the good old woman for being where he was. He assured her it was only because he thought he might do her some good that he had come up at Cecilia's request, to explain to her what he thought might be the cause of her trouble. He was glad he had been so fortunate as to come at the very nick of time.

Sally told him she saw Jacob more distinctly that night than ever. But the noise they had made put an end to the vision.

'And, I hope, will put an end to it for ever,' said Mr. Halley kindly. As he spoke he went over to the corner and lifted down the cloak and hat, saying he thought it would be better to leave Jacob nothing to put on.

The whole truth seemed to flash on Sally herself, without further remark from Mr. Halley. But he added — 'I observed that you were looking very steadily at these while you were speaking. I will take them with me.'

'Oh! no, leave them,' said Sally.

'Well, there will be no harm now that I have exorcised them of Jacob's ghost,' was Mr. Halley's good-natured consent.

He wished her good-night. Cecilia stayed a little with Sally, and Sally expressed to her the belief that her

father had seen to the bottom of the whole matter. Cecilia saw that Sally was sleepy and wished to be alone. She went down to say good-night to her father. They agreed to take no further notice of the matter. And Sally was no more troubled with Jacob's ghost.





CHAPTER XXXIX.

NEXT morning Cecilia rose an hour earlier, and wrote to Amelia. She told her the plan for the day. And asked if she and her father would join them on their run down to St. Cyr. One of the men-servants who had been brought in to fill Jacob's place, was sent with this note, and he was charged to secure a good carriage for the rather lengthy ride. The morning was fine, but a little fresh—not so warm as it looked. Cecilia wrapped a shawl round her, and put on a warm hood, and took a walk round the footpath on the outside of their vineyard. She was stepping along as quick as she could, and was paying no attention to anything up or down the road, when all at once she heard the rattle and rumble of a carriage. She said, 'Who can be struggling up that rutty road in a carriage at this time of the morning?' The only answer was more rumbling and rattling.

Cecilia turned to meet the carriage. And there, without mistake, was William Squirel, the best driver in

Tours, on the box of that very best carriage Cecilia had sent their man to hire. The man had not had time to be down at the coach-office yet, and who could this be ?

The road was very bad here, and as the driver let his horses pause a little, a blonde head, with cherry lips and blue eyes, laughing like the sunniest sky, and a mischievous look mantling on the whole face, popped out of the window—it was Alice Wells.

‘So, my fair dryad, or hamadryad, vinead, or whatever the people who know nonsense and all its names would call you, you thought you had escaped,’ was Alice’s salute.

Cecilia’s reply was a kiss, and Alice continued,—‘It may seem rather a round-about road this to take from Paris to Edinburgh, but it is straight enough for me, so I have just looked up to say, “How do-you-do?” on my way to Scotland.’

Cecilia took Alice all to her heart at once. Alice was still the same charmer, but she had not the machinery of Parisian gaiety to work out her spells with. And Cecilia had no fear of her, now that she was on her own ground at St. Radegonde.

‘Mr. and Mrs. Wells, my respected protectors, governors, and parents—these three are one, no ! two—have, for a long time, that is, for the last twenty-four hours, vehemently desired to visit Touraine. The presence of Mr. Halley, and his wisdom-stricken eldest and only daughter at St. Radegonde, near Tours, induced

the former responsible parties to set out in charge of their only and eldest daughter, in acceptance of the invitation sent them, in terms of such expressive and impressive silence, to come and see this country so rich in wine and workers,' was Alice's set speech.

'I admire your courage, to begin with, in encountering these roads, which seem to be much in need of the workers,' said Cecilia.

'And the workers, of the wine,' remarked Alice. 'But we have not been often upset, I assure you. When one has danced on the slipperiest of glaciers, one can dodge over the road to St. Radegonde. And three seasons in Italy habituate young and tender maidens to a variety of inconveniences.'

This visit was duly announced to Mr. Halley by Alice laughing all the time. Mr. Halley was but moderately pleased, and Alice was immoderately diverted with his most apparent confusion. The wealthy Frenchman, who had known what it was to receive guests with the oriental magnificence which Mr. Halley and Mr. Wells were both familiar with, was vexed at the necessity he was under of receiving the extravagant Englishman at St. Radegonde.

Cecilia saw what her father was thinking of. She was in no way annoyed at the modest dwelling. But to humour her father, she ordered all the porcelain, china, and silver ornaments to be rendered visible, and the servants to assume their new liveries, and to stand and look as unlike what they were accustomed to do, as they could well manage.

Mr. Halley was pleased when he saw all this, and Cecilia was amused, but Alice was enchanted.

‘What splendid damask, silver, and flowers—all the loveliness of art and nature—you have crammed into this wretched little—I beg your pardon, dear—this neat and limited mansion!’ was Alice’s first burst. ‘Two things puzzle me; what they should have to do in such a house, and where you stow away the imperishable materials. Miss Evans, if I don’t mistake, has depicted in one of her novels, I forget which, a chamber exactly like this. Her heroine—Helen, I think—is my dear Cecilia, who does the honours of her home with a grace which I can ill do without, but have to manage somehow to dispense with.’

Good cheer and excellent spirits at it are two things certain to secure a pleasant dinner-party. The spirits, of course, in question are not of the alcoholic sort. They are of the animal variety. Accordingly our unexpected visitors, reinforced by Amelia and her father, Colonel Drury, made a very merry and happy early dinner-party, before they all took the road to St. Cyr.

The two carriages in which they drove took the right bank of the Loire, till they came to more hilly roads. Up these they toiled till they came to the mansion-house which Colonel Drury had recommended to his friend Mr. Halley.

Alice, when she saw it, did not wait to be asked her opinion. It was ravishing. A terrace, protected with chestnut trees, through which you look away to the

lovely flow of the Loire, aroused our young English romancer's liveliest powers of description or decoration. The boats, the fishermen, the spreading sails were, it is true, all in animating harmony with the rest of the living panorama. Alice ran about, discovered new points of view, shouted to everybody to come and look from them, and to become partakers of her entire satisfaction. According to Alice, Mr. Halley had no occasion to think of anything but how he was most speedily to close with this bargain.

Cecilia was heartily amused with the enthusiasm of her friend and former enthraller. She wished to know what Amelia thought.

Not so demonstrative as Miss Wells, Miss Drury admired the house and its situation and surroundings very much, and said, with a smile, she 'would often come and see Cecilia when she was there.'

Cecilia thought the smile very peculiarly tender, and thought the attendant feeble blush singularly noticeable.

The party returned in time to have a look round Tours, and Mr. and Mrs. Wells and Alice said the tenderest adieus, and left to proceed to the Isle of Wight, to prepare for a tour in Scotland.

Eight days after, Mr. Halley and Cecilia and Maurice and Charles went again to look at this sea-side mansion, and, after all due deliberation, he bought it.

The former owners had been held in a sort of sacred reverence by the country people. The estate and house had been for a short time in the hands of a greedy,

oppressive landlord, and this intensified the religious affection for the original family. It was critical, then, to come into the property, even by purchase, when Mr. Halley bought it. But all doubt was soon at an end; and every member of the family, especially the young lady, was speedily enshrined in the affection and regard of the peasants.

They took up their abode at St. Cyr in June 1866. Cecilia visited all her poor friends before she left St. Radegonde. Many a tear was shed, although they knew that the house that had so long been a blessing to them was still to belong to the family. And Cecilia felt her heart sorely pained when she fully realized that this little house, so large in blessing, was no longer her home.

One thing she paid special attention to before she left St. Radegonde. It was to get Madeline placed in the Deaf and Dumb Institution. And it was gratifying to learn very soon that this sweet child showed both intelligence and aptitude in a high degree. Cecilia often called to inquire for her, and see her; and she felt the reward of her charity in this case coming nearer to reality than is often vouchsafed.

It is true that virtue is its own reward; but it is equally true that the reward of virtue is sometimes amplified. Cecilia's was amplified in the case of Madeline. There are two things to be remembered while we listen to this statement. The reward is never withheld. The amplification is not always to be looked for. In a

selfish age or an ungenerous nature, the reward that virtue is, is frequently sneered at. The sneer squanders the reward. The amplification is, to such a person, or in such a period, regarded as all that is worth working for. This is a sore evil. It is sore in the poor usurer in the great clearing-house of human hopes. It is sore in those who would be helped more heartily if such delusions were not strong upon their victims. Cecilia did not think on these things. She received the reward, and rejoiced in the amplification.





CHAPTER XL.

MAURICE took a deep interest in the new estate his father had purchased. This must not be set down merely to a sense of his own interest as the eldest son. Maurice was a truly kind-hearted brother. He could have derived no such pleasure, as it was evident he enjoyed, from any arrangement which was to his own advantage to the exclusion of his brother and sister. Besides, it is not to be forgotten, that the advantage, if so it is to be considered, of being an eldest son, is not so great in France as in our own country. The duties are quite as exacting, but the rights are fewer. This is true at all events in the matter of inheriting property. The rights of the eldest son are different in Maurice's country from the rights of the same member of a family in England. So it was no selfish feeling which gladdened Maurice's heart in the enjoyment of this new estate, which had come into the possession of the family.

And yet he took a deeper interest in all that con-

cerned it and its surroundings than either his father or Charles. Charles came home to enjoy himself. He left his business and his business habits in Tours. He was more open and frank with everybody. His habits of dealing with people in the trade he was fond of, told on his personal manners in all the relations of life. This is to be noticed as an effect very often produced on the tempers of gentlemen in what may be called easy circumstances of business. Indeed every pursuit in life has a very marked effect upon the person who finds his calling in it. We have a foolish habit of laughing at these peculiarities, as if they were something that could be quite easily helped. We unwisely sometimes make remarks on the habits, for example, of clergymen. We often hear people who bustle in the markets of a city, saying, that clergymen are not men of business. It is to be hoped not. Some good people might think that, perhaps, too many of them are. At anyrate it would be quite as reasonable in clergymen to laugh at the manner of making a speech which is observable in many eminent men of business, as it is for these latter to speak as they sometimes unadvisedly do. When it is necessary, clergymen can manage business quite as well as business gentlemen could manage to preach a sermon. The same kind of remarks might be made, and should be borne in mind always, when we are tempted to make comparisons to the disadvantage of soldiers, and sailors, and cousins from the country. There is a great deal of thoughtless sin in the conversations we carry on about such indivi-

duals. Manners occasion a good many infringements upon our higher morals. Talk about people's manners is often very unspiritual, if it is not also immoral.

Lawyers suffer a good deal from this unjust sort of talk, and they indulge a good deal in it too. Maurice was an earnest student of all that pertained to his profession as a notary. He was also very highly esteemed as a legal adviser, for the wisdom and prudence of his counsels. And this told upon his personal manners. It endeared him very much to his father especially. And Charles, as well as Cecilia, felt their love for their brother fortified by sincere respect. At the same time, they very naturally drew more to each other in their little confidences than either of them did to Maurice. His habits of reserve, fostered, as they were, by his daily necessities in the notary's office, told on all his enjoyments, as well as on everything else.

But there are other things to be remembered in Maurice's history. He was indeed the eldest son. The duties implied in this relationship he met manfully while yet a boy. That mould which care casts over the spirit of youth, had to be too surely assumed by Maurice. His mother had dreaded it for all her children. It was the hope of eschewing it which gladdened her heart most, when she inherited Mrs. Lemay's estate. But his mother's death, and all the circumstances of the family, whose tale I have recorded, exposed Maurice especially to many of the influences which she would so fain have shielded all her children from.

Let no one think for a moment that these remarks are made with any intention of arousing sympathy for Maurice. I never met a young gentleman who needed it less. They may deepen our love for him. And they explain to some extent, why it was that he seemed to know all about the circumstances of his neighbours, especially the poor, and the old people who had been formerly dependents of the family, whose memory was cherished with so much affection by everybody in St. Cyr. This sort of relaxation came to Maurice as the first enjoyment to which he had naturally taken, and to which he returned with zest, in any of the few leisure hours of his laborious young life.

It is to tell one or two of the results of this enjoyment that has led me into so many particulars about Maurice.

There lived in a cottage, about a mile from the house Mr. Halley had bought, a very respectable old couple named John and Mary Bodine. They had both been servants to the old family. Their love for them was a pretty near approach to pure idolatry. They had suffered much harsh treatment from the oppressor who lived for a few wretched years in miserly possession of the old family property. No doubt they might have avoided a good deal of this. They indulged in expressions of bitterness which did them no good, and exerted no kindly influence on those to whom they were made. For it always happens, that the powers that be have devoted adherents. These find their account in

conciliating the possessors and dispensers of present advantage. Accordingly, the unjust interloper had the benefit of the tales of eager and spiteful informers ; and John and Mary Bodine suffered consequences many of which were due to their own imprudence.

The simple old people looked on with jealousy at the transfer of the property to another new possessor. But there were two things to incline them to look favourably on the new-comers. First the estate was purchased in open market ; and the former owner came into possession, they knew not how. And secondly, they were informed, and rightly too, that a large portion of the profit of the purchase to the disposer would go to the benefit of Victor Charles Michel, whose misfortunes they shared, and whose memory they adored.

It was one of the peculiar delights of Maurice to spend a long evening conversing with these old people about their master and mistress, and their two sons, Frederick and Victor Charles. Robert Michel—they understood that now, in some far country where they spoke English, Victor Charles called himself Mitchell—but Robert Michel was their revered old landlord. He had died one day suddenly, when looking round one of his farms. This left his widow, who was of the same age as himself—then about sixty—helpless and hopeless. A daughter, who had married, lent all the assistance she could ; but with a large family and a delicate husband, it was not much she could do for them, nor often that she could be with them.

It was thought when old Mr. Michel died, that he had left his family handsomely provided for. But, alas ! the result of an inquiry into his affairs revealed the unhappy issues of certain speculations which John Bodine only understood as far as that they brought ruin very near the door of the family. Mary seemed to understand them all a great deal better than John ; but when it came to explanations, she could never remember the names of either people or places.

Matters were arranged pretty well, however ; and for a while the widow and her two sons remained in the house. Frederick was the eldest.

‘He was always working with his planes and his saws,’ said Mary.

Maurice. Was he fond of jobbing about ?

Mary. Oh ! bless you, no ! Mr. Frederick, or Master Freddy, as we used to call him, was always making something new. When he was only a boy, he made a Noah’s ark, and built a mount—something about a rat, I forget its name, but he said it was the right place to put Noah’s ark upon. And he emptied many a bucket of water into a hole he dug round it, and he built up walls with the clay round the hole, to make a flood, as he used to say.

Maurice. He must have been an inventive genius.

Mary. A what ?

John. A man that makes new things.

Mary. Ay ! that he was. If he had only got pay for all the new things he made, the old house would have

belonged to the family to this good day, and begging your pardon for saying so.

Maurice. Did he ever make anything that was brought before the public, John?

Mary. That it would, if the Government had only sent him the eagles.

Maurice. The what?

Mary. The eagles.

John. But the young gentleman does not know what you mean. You know, sir, Mr. Frederick turned his attention a good deal to what you call balloons. He always did think that it would be as easy to fly through the air as to sail over the water. Well, many a try he made. And many a queer thing he did, and made me do.

Mary. Ay, nearly made you break your neck, just two days after we were married, bless him!

John. Well, as I was saying, Master Freddy—no, he was a man by this time—Mr. Frederick tried many and many a way to get his balloons to fly. But one day he was away from home, and he came to the banks of a canal, and he saw a horse drawing a boat; and the horse had a rope fastened to it, and the other end was to the boat—

Maurice. That is quite common.

Mary. But, bless him! he had never seen it. He had always been a good boy, and never would go from home.

John. Well, says he to himself, this explains all my

difficulties. I must get the right sort of horse to draw my boat.

Maurice. And where would he get banks for his horse to walk on?

Mary. Ah! leave that to Master Freddy.

John. Well, after a good deal of reading and thinking, what should he do but make up his mind to get fine large eagles to draw his boat through the air.

Mary. Yes, as high as you like, and as far as any reasonable person would wish to go.

John. So you see he set to work and got a great sheet of paper. I used to hold down the edges and the corners for him; and he would sketch the most beautiful thing with wings, and it was drawn by two, three, four, five, six, seven eagles, the prettiest sight you ever did see.

Maurice. Did he ever make it?

Mary. That did he.

John. And he wrote to Paris to the Government for eagles, and they would never send them. Poor Mr. Frederick felt very disappointed. At least he took a fever.

Mary. We thought it was owing to his being up the hill so much of cold mornings and nights.

John. And our good kind young master never got better; and his mother soon followed him.

The two excellent old people were very much affected at this part of the conversation, and wept bitterly.

They never liked to talk so freely about Victor Charles, the younger brother. He had been sent to the

military academy in Paris. They heard at home of some riotous proceedings he had been in the midst of in 1848. He seemed to get out of this difficulty by some means, they did not know how ; but at the end of 1852 Mr. Victor Charles Michel had disappeared altogether. When John went to inquire of the notary what had become of his young master, he was very angrily told to hold his tongue and get out of the office. The bad man—they never named him—who got the house, seemed to know all about him. Indeed this man had come from Paris. The estate was given him for something he had done to find out a story against Master Victor Charles.

The old people were apparently afraid to speak of the matter at all.

Colonel Drury, however, knew all about it. He had very narrowly escaped himself ; and, by his influence and the help of some friends, Mr. Victor Charles Michel, now in America, got a considerable share of the purchase-money from the sale of the estate. The Government had been relenting considerably towards the sufferers at that evil time ; and it was hoped there would soon be an amnesty extended to all political offenders. At all events, Mr. Victor Charles was rendered very comfortable by Mr. Halley's purchase, and John and Mary Bodine loved the new family accordingly.



CHAPTER XLI.

WE shall have no less pleasure in contemplating Cecilia as the lady of a mansion than we have had in our experience of her as house-keeper at St. Radegonde. She very soon availed himself of the advantages of the fine estate at St. Cyr. And to say that she felt all the charm of its beauties, is only to say, in more words, that she was Cecilia Halley. She speedily adapted herself, also, to the larger way of life, and the more distant and formal respect of the inhabitants around.

Sally was not so long in getting reconciled to the new state of things as one would have expected. The view of the Loire began by-and-bye to be as attractive as the well in the court used to be ; and the chestnuts and all the rest of the trees on the hill-side were a tolerable substitute to Sally for the two fig-trees which guarded the garden-gate at St. Radegonde.

The horses in the stable were not without their attraction to Sally. There were horses to ride, and carriage horses. Cecilia had been learning to ride

ever since they went to live at Tours ; and had, indeed, been a skilful rider for some time. She often rode out now with her brothers. These young gentlemen had each kept close to his business. Maurice was now head clerk in Mr. Delorme's office. He was duly qualified to set up for himself as a notary whenever he and his father saw it fitting. But he would do nothing that might seem to be in opposition to Mr. Delorme.

Charles had formed quite a taste for the manufacture and merchandise of Mr. Rose's business. He had no wish for any other station in life than as a merchant and manufacturer in the silk stuff and ribbon trade, as he had acquired a first-rate knowledge of that trade under Mr. Rose.

Such was the contentment of this family when they went to live in the country at St. Cyr. They were loved by all who knew them in town and country. In the country they had none of the town's haughtiness about them. They were not proud ; they were not condescending. They spoke to the peasants with a due sense of the respect they owed to people in another, if a lower, rank of life. They had been taught that to be lower socially was not to be inferior individually. Or rather they had taught themselves this. For few children ever got less of what is called teaching. Blanche Delorme had received a good deal of it ; and the results thus far only went to show how much the original dispositions of the heart, before and beyond teaching, have to do with the shape our characters ultimately take.

Charles now realized a shadow of his original ambition to be a mariner. It is true there was a difference between the man's real pleasure and the boy's reverie of fame and greatness. He had to content himself with navigating the placid Loire instead of daring the stormy ocean. And a two-oared boat had to be doing instead of a ship in full sail. But he attained unto so much ; and, to judge from appearances, it gave him as great pleasure as any accomplishing of the feats dreamed of in boyhood was ever likely to afford.

In the evening, these four of a family used to enjoy very much this partial realization of Charles's early visions.

Maurice and Charles pulled like the expert rowers they were.

Cecilia was Charles's confidant. Being the two younger, perhaps this was very natural. It certainly was very sweet to see them loitering about the banks of the Loire, more like lovers than brother and sister. Often did they assist at what they pleasantly called seeing the sun put to bed. The banks of the Loire, down by St. Cyr, present sometimes bluffs all covered over with beautiful vegetation ; at other times, retreats for the still flowing waters, where you will see an occasional fisherman's boat taking rest.

Charles and Cecilia knew every one of these for a long way along their own right bank of the river. Sometimes they would wander away up to the little wood of St. Come, which extends itself above the rounded



Maurice and Charles pulled. — Page 268.

knolls and the reaches. And these rambles of the brother and sister left impressions on the memory of each, which the sun never set upon or left ungilded.

Before the Halleys were a week at St. Cyr, Amelia and her father came to see them on a visit. Amelia, while she was there, joined in all the walks of Charles and Cecilia. And being now a fine young woman, she was a charming addition to their family parties. Colonel Drury was a friend after Mr. Halley's own heart. Thoughtful and inclined to a slight melancholy, but with a soldier's superiority to anything maudlin, he could enter into the heart's own communion with the brave merchant who had dared and suffered so much.

The Delormes did not come much to St. Cyr. Blanche had been for a time very reserved with Cecilia. But it seemed to Cecilia a reserve which was very anxious to burst its own barriers.

The truth is, a darker sorrow than Blanche had been strong enough to cause, was settling down on this beclouded family. At the time when Mr. Halley was purchasing the estate at St. Cyr, Mr. Delorme was beginning to curtail his family expenses very remarkably. He sold his carriage and horses, and dismissed several of his servants. Mrs. Delorme and Blanche declined all invitations out. And they issued none. They were only to be seen at church, where their dress was always now of the very plainest. At the same time, there was no interruption in Mr. Delorme's business as

a notary. There was nothing in his manner when he was consulted which gave any hint of distress. And this, put together with a good many other things which admitted of no doubt, was puzzling both to those who felt a sincere interest in the family, and to those who would have been equally busy about it, had it concerned anybody else.

What had happened? Nothing new. The spirit of speculation was abroad with all his lies, lures, fortunes, and bankruptcies. He possessed the great art of glamour—an ancient, deceitful, and dangerous power. He was casting it at this time over the wisest. He caught by it Mr. Delorme. But unwise, because inexperienced in every business but his own, Mr. Delorme suffered heavy losses. He risked all his fortune to recover them. And he had to sell the trappings of honour to save that honour itself.

Maurice was his natural successor, now that there was the slightest tarnish, if not upon his honour, at least upon his wisdom. And Mr. Delorme was the first himself to mention the subject. He proposed to Maurice to sell him the house in which the business had been so long carried on, and to go himself and live in a small house he had in the country at Marmoutier.

‘I shall buy the house,’ said Maurice, ‘but I shall not forget the Conscription. Mr. Delorme shall continue the notary of St. Symphorien. I shall be as I am, head clerk.’

‘My dear Maurice, you are young. Nobody does

business in that way,' was the old gentleman's reply, and he meant it.

'I owe you much, Mr. Delorme, but I cannot allow you to set limits to my gratitude,' was Maurice's ultimatum.

Maurice was acting under his father's advice. And the matter was arranged according to their plan.

Mr. Delorme had long ago cast his bread upon the waters. He now found it after many days. His recent attempts at procuring the means of comfort when he might retire from business, had proved the folly of his worldly wisdom. His life-long endeavours to discharge the duties of goodness were now his strength and protection. When Mr. Delorme listened to Mrs. Lemay's plans of kindness and helped her to give them effect, he thought only of his duty and the duty of his client. When Maurice came first to see him and the estate his mother had recently inherited, Mr. Delorme was kind because all was to some extent in his power. He felt a sincere delight in all the subsequent career and success of the family. He counselled Mrs. Halley with wisdom. He guarded the supposed orphans with affection. And the recovery of their lost father had been to him one of the great joys of his life. In all this he was casting his bread upon the waters. And in none of these pleasures of duty was he seeking his own. But 'I am found of them that seek me not,' is one of the voices of God's reward. And now, in Mr. Delorme's old age, Mr. Halley and Maurice were taking wise counsel, and maturing plans

which were to render him more comfortable, and much more free from care, than the results of his own speculations could have accomplished, had they even been successful to his heart's most eager desire. Whether Maurice had begun to have any feelings quite peculiar to himself, and not yet shared with his father, I cannot say. Very probably he had. And the direction they took we shall learn by-and-by.





CHAPTER XLII.

ANOTHER change came over the family of the Delormes, partly in consequence of the great change just recorded. Blanche comprehended the situation of her parents. I say that this change was partly owing to the other. The preparation for Blanche's conduct now had been long in process. It was a result of her mother's plan, but it was worked out differently from the way she had proposed. Cecilia's influence had been the chief external force to which Blanche had yielded. But it is not to be forgotten that nature gave Blanche Delorme a kind heart. She was slow in acquiring that amount of perception which is called common sense. She was in proportion slow in clearing away a great deal of the rubbish of vanity and idleness which get thrown, some-way or other, over the kindest of hearts. But Cecilia, her father's circumstances, and perhaps another influence, had prepared Blanche to turn her kind heart to good account. For it must be remembered that kind hearts are very often turned to the very worst account.

Mrs. Delorme's health suffered very severely from Mr. Delorme's losses. Blanche shed many tears about this time, which were not the less bitter that they flowed in silence. Painful thoughts obtruded themselves very unceremoniously when she was ironing a little under her mother's directions.

Blanche had conquered one very evil habit—that was, to loiter hours over her toilette. All the fine names we are accustomed to give to this habit, are only other names for laziness. A person not lazy could not indulge in this idleness.

Yet Blanche Delorme's apprenticeship was gentleness itself compared to Cecilia's training. The least service she devoted to a weak mother and a tender father, was repaid at once with,—‘You are a great comfort to us, dear. Duty discharged, as you perform it, will meet its speedy reward.’

Blanche continued to improve in spite of this, which was in itself very much against her.

The first hint Cecilia got about the reason for the trouble the Delormes were in, was when her father asked her advice about some point affecting Maurice's settlement in the business. The discovery deepened and broadened her affection for Blanche. The very next day she called and insisted on Mrs. Delorme and Blanche accepting an invitation to stay a short time at St. Cyr. They came, and they went home very much the better of the change.

Blanche was becoming an early riser. One morning

she took a fancy to open the window and look out a little. It was the month of June. The little islands which stud and gem the Loire were smiling back the eager looks of the sun. Peasants were passing to the market. Men were loaded ; women were bearing their share of the burden of life with their husbands. Some soldiers were marching past to parade. All this was old ; but to Blanche it was new. 'I also must fulfil my task,' she said to herself, and she prayed for strength to do it. Another circumstance very much affected Blanche's kind heart for good. She saw that people treated her with respect, even when they made no remarks to her about any change in her conduct.

If people are given to speaking about their neighbours' faults, and to judging of actions regarding which they cannot be put in possession of all the elements of a just judgment, it is only fair to society to say, that it is quick to render homage to virtue. And when any of those who knew Blanche, happened to reflect on her past waywardness, the predictions of her future wisdom were always as emphatically pronounced as the reflections.

And now, while we say good-bye to the Delormes, how are we to regard them ? Thus : The wayward girl is an amiable woman. Her character has more of a conquest in it than some excellent women are conscious of. But the conquest is unmistakable. Mrs. Delorme is a little better, and keeps so. Mr. Delorme and she live at their nice little house at Marmoutier ;

and they want for nothing. Maurice insisted on such a settlement as would secure this before he would allow his name to be put up as the sole head of the business. And where is Blanche? She is living in the house she has been brought up in as Mrs. Maurice Halley. And her sister and brother and father-in-law are proud of her, as they have reason to be. Mr. and Mrs. Delorme live with them as often as they like, and that is very often.

This implies a change at St. Cyr. But it does not tell of another. Where is Charles? At St. Cyr? Pretty often. But his home is St. Radegonde, and Amelia is his wife. My readers have been expecting this. And Cecilia was gladdened in the most sacred secret places of her heart when it was mentioned to her as a likely event; but she had not expected it. Cecilia was not yet as wise in the world as some young women, who can tell the meaning of every look, and all about who looks at who, and how they look in every party they go to. But Cecilia was wise in all she understood. And she understood the most of the things that were good for her at her time of life.

And Cecilia? What sighing swain will the young ladies just supposed have discovered bending the knee to her in secret? I put the question in earnest. I am in want of information; for I don't know of one. And I am thankful. She is now nineteen years of age. No more tender woman's heart beats in all the soil of beautiful France. She is happy at St. Cyr, and makes her father

happy. She is happy at St. Symphorien, and makes her brother and sister and their baby happy. She is the happiest of all, perhaps, at St. Radegonde. It was the home of her childhood. It is now the home of her earliest friend and her dearest brother. She often meets Mr. Drury there, and often at St. Cyr.

But Sally? Where is she all the time? To her own surprise and ours, she is a very contented old lady, in the truest sense of the term, and she has her joke about her income, which she calls her rental. It is paid as regularly as the recurring seasons. And it is paid by a real live factor. For neither Cecilia nor her father will let Sally feel dependence. It is not known what she does with her money. For she lives at St. Cyr in all the honour her age, and worth, and the work of her life deserve. But, no doubt, there will be a good account of her money rendered one day, as there is certain to be of all her other talents. The ghost has never been mentioned again.

There is another constant resident at St. Cyr. It is Cecilia's maid, Madeline. She certainly has not much to say; but it is wonderful what she can do. She is a sort of fairy. Really she is. A pair of neater hands for needlework, of the plain or fancy sort, are not possessed by any lady in all the land. Her father is master of a rope-work, and Anthony is his foreman.

One evening the whole family was assembled on the terrace, which overlooks the Loire at St. Cyr. Mr. and Mrs. Delorme and Mr. Drury were there on the

occasion. Mrs. Nelsy was on a lengthened visit. It was a pretty complete group, of which Cecilia was the centre. Much spirited conversation went round from heart to heart. Mr. Halley seemed a little thoughtful. At last he said, 'I owe it to Cecilia's courage and goodness that I enjoy in my old age the happiness I thought once I had lost for ever.'

This was a testimony to the life-long career of Cecilia's Triumph.

There were other testimonies. But they were not all told. Mrs. Nelsy thought at the time Mr. Delorme was speaking of a conversation she had had with Louisa Farel just before she had left Paris to come to St. Cyr on this visit. Louisa's nature had been deepened and broadened by that incident of Cecilia's bitter repentance. Cecilia had, in her own remorse, detected a weakness in Louisa's nature which required fortifying. Louisa's sense of the highest form of character at that time was becoming rather less acute. She was eminently fitted for society. So much so that she was becoming slowly but surely disqualified for being alone. One way of losing our own soul is an incessant craving for society. The depth of life in Cecilia's heart, hidden from all the world, had been a reminder, if not a new discovery, to Louisa. She lost none of her sweet smile. But it seemed intenser, because it rayed from a deeper centre after her soul had communed with Cecilia's. The conversation Mrs. Nelsy thought of had been full of these radiances.

Maurice thought of how Cecilia's purity had guarded him in the oft-recurring temptations to which youth is unavoidably exposed. Blanche knew who had been as a voice from heaven to her. Charles and Amelia too recalled some of the happiest hours of their lives after Mr. Delorme made the remark I have recorded. Indeed all the group thought of Cecilia, but one. And she thought of the sweetness of the smile of Blanche's little boy, as he tried to catch between his two tiny palms the fruit she was holding just out of his reach. Cecilia, of all who were in that group, was the least aware of the triumph of goodness her whole life had been. Jacob's dying faith in God had been strengthened by her meekness. Madeline looked on her as little less than all the light of her life. Mr. Drury could trace the fuller flow of Amelia's womanly tenderness as she ceased to be a girl, to Cecilia's influence. Her life will unite itself, no doubt, in the living pages of many other hearts. Here I close her story thus far. And I am glad to do it. Not a corner of another leaf in her life shall I turn. I should dread the possibility of a shadow upon it.



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